

RECEIVED 1 JAN 1879.

102 Fleet Street.
E.C.



News of the Week, Music, Fashions, Novelettes, Domestic Varieties, &c.

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No. 110.—Vol. II.—NEW SERIES.]

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 26, 1868.

[PRICE TWOPENCE.
POST FREE 3s. 3d. PER QUARTER]

CHARLES DICKENS.

NO more fitting time could surely be chosen to publish a portrait of our great novelist, than the season which gave birth to his glorious "Christmas Carol," the season round which he has taught us, as no one else could teach, to weave so many pleasant memories — to cluster thoughts of tenderness and mercy, and forgiveness. Charles Dickens! — plain Charles Dickens still, — what magic there is in the name! how at the mention of it, there rise before us a bright array of characters whose being seems as tangible and real to us as our own — existences that teach us manliness, and self-sacrifice, and love, and duty — and from the study of whom we rise with higher hopes and nobler aspirations, as if the lessons of their lives were written with a pen of light. Dickens is emphatically the novelist of the people, his most successful characters are all taken from the humbler and middle classes, and though it would be too much to say his powers as a delineator of nature are bounded by such distinctions, he certainly is never so striking when he steps into higher ranks. The sale of his works has been perhaps unexampled, and most of them have been translated into various languages, including even the Dutch and Russian; thus proving the true world-embracing genius of the author, though of course we are proud to know that several of his best conceptions are peculiarly English. As a humourist, he satirizes, but without bitterness or cynicism, the shams of every grade, whether clerical, legal, medical, literary, philanthropical, or social; and recognizes merit wherever found. If we learn to abhor a Stiggins, we laugh over, and while we laugh admire the impulsiveness, geniality, and warm-heartedness of a Pickwick; if we one moment thank the Fates that we have escaped the sharp practise of a Dodson and Fogg, we are the next convulsed over the wise saws of a worthy original — Sam Weller, jun.; and if we find held up to public execration Squeers, of Dotheboys Hall, and join in the ridicule of the renowned Potts — if we rejoice that the race of Bob Sawyers is happily fast dying out, and wish the same might be said of the "Patriarch" genus stigmatized in "Little Dorrit," we also are cheered to know that the world has



CHARLES DICKENS.

[From a Photograph.]

been made the better for the constancy of such as Little Dorrit, and the life and death of Little Nell. Charles Dickens was born at Landport, in Hampshire, in February, 1812. He was placed as a clerk in an attorney's office, but was induced by a strong literary bias to obtain an engagement as a reporter on the staff of the *Morning Chronicle*, then in the zenith of its fame. It was to this paper that he contributed those "Sketches of English Life and Character" which were subsequently reprinted in a collective form under the now well-known title, "Sketches by Boz." This was the strange signature under which Dickens became known to

fame, and he himself explains its origin. It was, he tells us, the "nickname of a pet child, a younger brother, whom I had dubbed Moses, in honour of the Vicar of Wakefield; which being facetiously pronounced through the nose, became Boses, and being shortened, became Boz." His next venture was the "Pickwick Papers," a work that, viewed as a whole, he has never surpassed. In the "Dickens" edition, the author, in a charming little bit of autobiography, gives us its history. "I was a young man," he writes, "of two or three and twenty, when Messrs. Chapman and Hall, attracted by some pieces I was, at that time writing in the *Morning Chronicle* newspaper, waited upon me to propose a something that should be published in shilling numbers." The universal success of "Pickwick," naturally brought Mr. Dickens a variety of offers from London publishers, and resulted in his connection with Mr. Bentley, who engaged his services as editor of the *Miscellany*, in the second number of which, for Feb, 1837, appeared the first instalment of "Oliver Twist." This story was reprinted in three volumes towards the close of 1838, and was quickly followed by "Nicholas Nickleby," which appeared in shilling numbers uniform with "Pickwick." In 1840, Mr. Dickens commenced the production, in weekly numbers, of the series entitled "Master Humphrey's Clock," which included, amongst other tales, "The Old Curiosity Shop," and "Barnaby Rudge." Upon his return to England in 1842, from a visit to America, he published his "American Notes for general Circulation." In 1844, came "Martin Chuzzlewit;" and in 1845, the *Daily News* was started under his editorial auspices, but he soon withdrew. About Christmas, 1843, appeared that inimitable "Christmas Carol" that has touched so many hearts in every land. "The Chimes," with its goblin lore, greeted the Christmas of 1845; and the exquisite fairy tale, "The Cricket on the Hearth," came next. In addition to these, Mr. Dickens has written "Dombey and Son," published in 1847-8; "The History of David Copperfield," in 1849-50; "Bleak House," in 1853; "Little Dorrit," in 1856; and a "Tale of Two Cities," "The Uncommercial Traveller," and "Great Expectations," the last three having been reprinted from "All the Year Round." "Our Mutual Friend" came last.

Young Mrs. Oakley's New Winter Bonnet.

By SHIRLEY GERRARD.

Author of "My Dickens's Dinner," "The Old Story," &c.



IN this unequally divided world a sovereign is a very small thing to a great many people, and a very large thing to others; twenty shillings are nothing to a man who can put five hundred, or perhaps a thousand pounds, into his pocket-book, to be muddled away, he could not explain how, before the close of a week. It goes for opera tickets, an Indian cashmere

for his wife, pretty chains and lockets and earrings for his daughters, little useless odds and ends for himself. A sovereign here, another there, and the thousand has melted away in no time! But to the man with the small salary, well paid but hard worked for, the man who has rashly, but happily married, a sovereign is a large thing. Or rather it is an important thing, not to be lightly changed into twenty shillings, for shillings have a remarkable trick of disappearing one does not know exactly how, and the poor man finds that the best way of keeping his sovereign is to keep it—unchanged!

John Oakley, junior, was one of these poor men, and he had not even remained single until his income amounted to the three hundred per ann., which so many people—having themselves four times three hundred per ann.—declare is quite enough to marry upon. John Oakley was called "junior," although his father's name had been James; but there was a brother of his father's still alive whose name was John, and he was John Oakley, senior; and his wealth was immense, and he had never married, and he was considered eccentric, and in his temper rather sharp, and he was very hard upon the follies of youth—he considered the marriage of John junior a very youthful folly indeed—and his many relatives called him a miser and a "dreadful old screw" behind his back, but to his face they were all smiles and sweet words; unfortunately for them, however, John, senior, received smiles and sweet words as a child is told to receive sweetmeats, he opened his mouth and shut his eyes; he would not see to what all the flattery tended, and his purse remained obstinately closed.

When John, junior, announced his intended marriage to his uncle, John, senior, gave him such a fierce lecture upon the folly of bringing the cares of a family upon himself at his age, and with his income, that John, junior, fired up into an equally fierce defence of himself; and after a battle royal, the uncle and nephew parted in anger, the former chuckling over his secret belief that before twelve months the young man would be ready to eat a huge dish of "humble pie," said dish being only a prelude to a petition for a little help towards paying his Christmas bills; and the latter internally anatomized the cold and calculating prudence which would prevent a young man from taking an angel with violet eyes and bright brown hair to his heart and home.

And to his heart and home John, junior, did take the angel; but she was not angelic in any sense of the word, she was only a very pretty, good-tempered, soft-hearted, lovable woman, not extravagant, not fond of pleasure, a thoroughly domestic, sensible little person, and she made John, junior, a good wife; and although she would gladly have discovered any honest way of making five pounds go as far as ten, one year, two, three, four years passed away, there were two babies in the small nursery, but John, junior, had not eaten the "humble pie," nor requested aid in the matter of his Christmas bills!

He never repented his love-match, and very pleasant it is to record the fact, seeing how many there are who do repent of having hastily tied that knot with their tongues which their teeth cannot unloose; he had not ceased to admire the violet eyes, nor dimmed their brightness with tears caused by his neglect and unkindness; he was, in truth, a model husband, and if it vexed him that he could not clothe his brown-haired angel in the purples and fine lilies in which the wives of rich men went trailing about, he wisely kept his vexation to himself, and kept looking forward to the "good time" which we all believe to be coming. Yes, we have all ships at sea, bringing to us a rich freight of good fortune! what matter if they never reach the harbour and land their cargo; we can still live on watching and waiting for the favourable wind; surely, some day before we die it will fan our cheeks and waft the long-watched for sails into sight!

John, junior, had his ship at sea, but it was only a poor little barque; he might rise to be one of the chief clerks in the great counting-house of his employer at a salary of five hundred a year, but his dream had been to be a partner, and he had cherished hopes that his rich uncle would come forward and make the dream a reality, yet when his aid could only have been bought by the sacrifice of her, John, junior scuttled his ship with his own hands, and married, and his marriage turned out well, which, as I have said before, is more than can be said for half of the foolish love-matches which are taking place every day, so let no one imagine that I am advocating "insolvent matrimonial bliss!"

So times went on: Mr. and Mrs. John Oakley, junior, led a very quiet life; they were not by any means rich

enough to go about here and there amusing themselves, and their "ain fire-side" gave them more pleasure than any of the attempts at dinner and evening parties which people moving in their own hum-drum set, and scarcely better off than they, used to give. Rumours used to reach them at Christmas time each year of the family gatherings which were wont to cluster round "Uncle John's" hospitable board, for in spite of his reputation as a "screw," the old gentleman was in the habit of setting up on Christmas, New-Year's, and Twelfth-Day a golden image, in the shape of a capital dinner, for his affectionate relatives to fall down and worship; but for John, junior, and his wife, were reserved the parts of the obstinate Jews, with this difference, that the sound of the harp, sackbut, psaltery, &c., &c., did not reach their ears—in other words, they were not asked to these yearly festivities.

John, junior, to whom increase of years and responsibilities had brought no relief for "humble pie," wished for the invitations to come, that he might have the pleasure of refusing them; and when the fifth Christmas after his marriage arrived, and with it the "pipe of peace" from Uncle John, in the shape of a kindly worded invitation to the young people to dine with him on the 25th of December, John sent a polite but decided refusal—the politeness, it should be explained, came from Mrs. John, the decision was all his own.

As the husband and wife walked home from church on Christmas-Day, John, junior, forgetting all the good things he had listened to in the sermon respecting the sin of not being contented with what he had, and without what he had not, grew very eloquent upon the subject of the somewhat shabby bonnet, which did not adorn, certainly, but which could not wholly disfigure, his wife's pretty head; and he expressed himself thus:—

"Are bonnets very expensive, Nellie? They ought not to be, for they are certainly very small."

"Size has nothing to do with the price, dear," she made answer seriously, for the bonnet was a serious trouble to her. "They are enormously expensive! I priced some the other day, and the cheapest were two guineas. I saw one or two for thirty shillings, but they were so ugly I would not have taken a present of any of them."

"By Jove!" John said. "Two guineas for that morsel of stuff, whatever it is! I saw one to-day, and I think it was made of a little bird of some kind, with white

piece, ever so many three-pennies, and two sovs. and a half! Hurrah! is not that unsurpassed wealth? There," and he put the two sovereigns into her hand, "there Master Johnnie out of one of those, and with the other buy that bonnet, you told me of. I intended to give it to you on New-Year's-Day, but it will be twice as jolly for you to have the bonnet to wear that day instead of to buy."

"Oh, John, what a darling you are! but are you quite sure you can spare it?"

John closed her pretty mouth with another kiss, and dashed away, leaving her with the gold glittering in her hand and tears glittering in her eyes. It takes so very little to make poor people happy!

Nellie immediately set about her little household arrangements, as she intended to go out early to do her shopping. It was such fun to her to have two sovereigns to spend, and she would buy something for John, she determined, a pair of warm over gloves, he wanted them badly that frosty weather; and then Johnnie's boots and a pair of nice red gaiters for baby, and the bonnet for herself! She was tying on the old one and getting ready to start, when her little nursery maid came in to say that there was an old man at the door who wanted particularly to see her. "He won't say what he wants, ma'am, he only says he must see you."

"Very well, bring him into the hall," said Nellie. "I shall be down directly," and presently she ran down stairs looking very bright and pretty in her shabby bonnet. Standing to receive her with his hat in his hand she found a man poorly dressed, but with an air of reduced respectability about him which won her sympathy at once. Nellie never passed by on the other side of poverty, but to a wayfarer who had evidently seen better days she was inclined to give a much larger sum than the conventional twopenny! The man's face was rather pinched and worn, but more hungry-looking men had stood in that little hall.

"Well, my poor man," Nellie began.

"You are Mrs. John Oakley, are you?" he questioned, looking at her from head to foot.

"Yes," she said, "how do you know my name? What do you want?"

What he wanted occupied a long time in the telling, and of all the tales of woe which had touched Nellie's soft heart, his was the most piteous. Sick wife! Lost situation! Starving family! The prospect of the workhouse if some kind and charitable person did not help him to weather the storm. That the storm would be weathered he felt confident; he had a promise of lucrative employment, but in the meantime if his rent remained unpaid—

But long before he had reached that climax Nellie's hand was in her pocket, and one of the precious sovereigns was being taken out.

"Will that help your rent, my poor man," she said, "and get a little wine for your sick wife? I was going to buy a new bonnet with it," she added, not by way of making a parade of her generosity, but with the vague idea and hope that an allusion to a new bonnet would come in almost like a humorous tag to his painful narrative.

The old man looked at her with a quick and penetrating glance. "There are not many ladies who would do it," he said. "I accept your bounty gratefully, and you will never repent it."

He was gone in another moment, and Nellie stood with rather a puzzled expression, wondering if she had fallen into the dupe of an impostor! There was something odd in his manner, she thought; it was not in the least like that of a common beggar. "How John will laugh at herself," she said, feeling half inclined to laugh at herself, "and he will be sure to say that I was taken in; and I dare say he is an old deceiver, but I can't help it now, and I must make my old bonnet look smart with new strings."

So with that very small crumb of comfort the unselfish little woman set out to "do her shopping"; she bought Johnnie's boots, and baby's gaiters and the warm over gloves for her husband, but having made up her mind that to put new strings into her old bonnet would be like marrying May to December, and with a far worse chance of agreement between the contracting parties than there might be between those two odd months, she refrained from buying them and returned home to meet her husband at dinner with as bright a face as if the prettiest bonnet in Regent-street was at that moment awaiting his inspection upstairs.

She hoped that he would forget to question her as to how she had invested her two sovereigns, and it seemed probable that she would escape explanation for that night at least, for John was full of some news which he had heard at the office that afternoon; it had been whispered about among the clerks that the head of the firm, Mr. Brownlow, was at last about to take a partner, but the name of the fortunate man who had been selected to join and share in the profits of that wealthy and well-known house had not transpired.

John, junior, was immensely excited! he could not forget that he had once looked forward to be, with his uncle's aid, in the position now about to be filled by another, and all the hopes and fears which had animated him then revived in full force; but not in any way making him regretful, or inciting him to say questionable things respecting his "untoward fate" or his "unlucky star"! It was a trying thing, or "hard lines," as he would have expressed himself in the peculiar phraseology of the day, to have lost such brilliant prospects, but the partner he had hoped still to have given up the partner he had pleased himself by taking for himself; so he was not put out or cross, he was only talkative and excited, wondering every moment "who the deuce the fellow could be?"

"You never saw my uncle, Nellie," he said, after a long pause; dinner was over and Nellie had got out her work basket. "No," she answered, "he couldn't come to the wedding, you know, and—"

"Would not come you mean," John interrupted.

"You always say the good-natured thing, Nellie, but

lace fringes, or whatever you call them, coming round in front like a horse's bearing rein. What are you laughing at, Nellie?"

"Those are lappets, you goose," Nellie answered, pinching his arm. "But I would not wear such an absurd thing perched on the top of my head for all the world! I should be quite satisfied with a dear little bonnet I saw—not in Regent-street, however, they are awfully dear there, but so nice, real darlings!—the other day for a guinea, and I think she would take a sovereign. It's made of white satin, trimmed with violet velvet, just the shade that becomes me, but—"

"Don't shut up like that, little woman."

"I'm not shutting up, John; I was only thinking that even a guinea is a great deal for me to give for a bonnet when I see so many poor creatures, really poor; but not exactly beggars, you know, who would be thankful for ever so little; and our little man at home wears out his boots so fast you can't think, and—"

"And you are never to have a little scrap of finery Nellie, because there are a lot of poor people in the world, and Johnnie wears out his boots fast." And John, junior, spoke rather bitterly, and thought of the partnership which might have been his; but then he glanced down at his wife's sweet face, the beauty of which the shabby bonnet could not mar, and he caught his temper before it was altogether lost. And they had a merry little Christmas dinner; and Nellie got a poor pensioner of her's into the hall and gave him a dinner, too, and sixpence by way of dessert, for she was a soft-hearted little woman, and being so, she got very often imposed upon by tales of woe that were all sham.

"John," said Mrs. John, a few days after, taking hold of her husband by the lapels of his coat, and detaining him after he had given her a farewell kiss, and was about to start for his office, "I'm very sorry, dear, but could you give me a little money? Johnnie's boots—"

"Are a weight upon his mother's mind," interrupted John, stooping for another kiss. "I have heaps of money, child! Look here!" and he emptied his pocket upon the breakfast table. "Three half-crowns, a two-shilling

you know as well as I do, that he thought I was an ass for marrying."

"Anyone, or me in particular?"

"Anyone! I am sure he had made up his crotchety mind that I was to be an old bachelor; or, at least, that I was to postpone matrimony until I could give my wife a mansion in Belgravia, and—Hullo! what a knock! no post at this hour, it must be a shop porter; your new bonnet Nellie! I quite forgot to ask you about it. By Jove! doesn't the little woman look jolly at the thought of her bit of finery."

Nellie had blushed up brightly, and was anxiously watching the door.

The maid came in bearing a band box, which she placed in her mistress's hand; it was properly addressed to Mrs. John Oakley, but still Mrs. John forbore to open it; she looked up at her husband instead.

"Well," he said, smiling, and putting his hand fondly on her shoulder, "is it such a rare thing for my poor little Nell to get a new bonnet, that she is afraid to look at it when it does turn up? Here goes! I'll have him out," and taking up his wife's scissors he flourished them over the string.

"Oh! John don't, pray don't," she cried. "There must be some mistake; it can't be for me, I bought no bonnet, a poor man came—"

"And wheeled you out of the sovereign with a lying tale of his dying wife and starving children. Oh, Nellie, you little goose, will nothing teach you to shut your ears. I'll be bound the fellow is laughing at you over a jolly supper at this very moment."

"Perhaps so," said poor Nellie, quite convinced now of her own folly; "but that doesn't account for this," and she shook the bandbox.

"Perhaps it's a hoax of some kind," said John, snapping at the string with rather a savage click of the scissors. Nellie raised the lid, a quantity of soft tissue paper puffed out, and hidden beneath it was the most exquisite little bonnet ever conceived by the taste, and executed by the cunning fingers of a first-rate modiste, and not too fine either for the intended wearer. It was handsome but quiet, and when John very awkwardly placed it upon his wife's head and tried to make ribbons intended to hang behind fall gracefully in front, he thought he had never seen her look so pretty.

"What a swell you are," he said admiringly. "I shall have to buy a new hat before I can attempt to walk with you."

"But where did it come from? John, did you?"

"Did I what? not I, indeed! I should not know you to set about choosing it; besides, you forget that I expected you to choose for yourself—no it must have come as a New Year's gift from some unknown admirer: you have been captivated some fellow, Madam, and he has broken out into a bonnet."

"Ought I to keep it, John?"

"Well of course you can give it away to the first old woman who comes making a poor mouth if you like; I hope it will become her as much as it becomes you, that's all: now then, fold it up again and let us have tea; I really begin to think that the good fairies are not extinct after all. There's the post now—perhaps the mystery will be explained."

There were two letters, one each for husband and wife. "Oh! John," said Nellie, as woman-like she took in the contents of her's at a glance.

"Oh, Nelly," said John, as he put his, half read, upon the table.

"Oh! John, another invitation, and such a kind one, from your uncle to dine with him on New Year's Day, to go directly after Church: he calls me his dear niece."

"His dear grandmother! I like that, after five years."

"Now John, you shouldn't remember things when other people are willing to forget."

"There is some special reward promised to the peace makers isn't there," said John smiling at her. "If so, you'll not be forgotten. My note is from the old fellow too, and he actually admits that he was wrong—I hope he is not going mad suddenly, and says that perhaps there are things in this world better worth having than money and position. That comes well from a man of his position, and with his balance at his bankers. He is sure, (listen to this Nellie,) that I am happier in the society of my amiable and affectionate wife—how does he know what sort of temper you have, my dear? he must have spent his autumn holiday at Blarney—than I would have been had I followed his wishes. And we are to forget and forgive, and all live happy ever after, as the people in stories do."

"And you will, won't you, John?"

"I am living happy at present, thank you."

"I mean we'll go."

"Well, I suppose I can't be brute enough to ride my high horse any longer when that poor old boy has made a second attempt to pull me to the ground. Yes, I think without loss of dignity we may go. It's well that the good fairies stood to you with the new bonnet, darling. I want you to look your best."

And he was gratified if "looking her best" meant that Mrs. John's sweet face was most becomingly crowned—in these days a bonnet cannot be said to frame a face—by the pretty head-dress so mysteriously sent for her adornment. Perhaps she had taken a shade more care than usual to arrange her beautiful hair, which had in it a wave no crimping pins could bestow.

When they left church after morning service on New Year's Day they took a cab and drove to Uncle John's house in the neighbourhood of Kensington. John, junior, was rather silent during the drive, and Nellie, like a good wife, sympathised with his mood, but she was at heart very glad that the breach between uncle and nephew was about to be bridged over. By the time they reached the house, however, Nellie had grown shy; she had a picture in her mind of Uncle John, and in spite of her charitable nature it was painted in rather austere and sombre colours; she feared, too, that he would not like her, and then all would go wrong again.

A smart maid servant showed them into a drawing-

room divided by a curtained *portiere* from a dining-room in which luncheon was laid. Nellie's love of pretty things broke out at once as she looked round the room, which was filled, but not overcrowded, with tastefully arranged furniture, books, and pictures. She was standing with her back to the door examining one of the latter when she heard a voice which seemed familiar address her husband in cordial words of welcome; she turned, and a hand, into which, as she well remembered, she had but a few days before put a charitable gift, was stretched out to meet her's. She stammered, blushed, and hesitated.

"You recognise me, then," said Uncle John, smiling, as he drew her to his side and put out his other hand to his nephew. "I found you stubborn, John," he went on in the same kind tone, "and I resolved to try what the woman was like for whom you had given up so much; I determined to see with my own eyes if a struggle with the world had soured the nature which the lover thought so perfect; lovers see perfections, you know, John, which husbands often fail to find; so I went to her and told a pitiful tale which thoroughly imposed upon her, and she need not be ashamed of her credulity, for I flatter myself that no professional could have begged with more assurance than I did, and she gave me far more than I expected, I must confess; she gave me a sovereign, with which I understood she was about to buy a new bonnet. I hope, my dear niece," he added, "that you approve of my taste in millinery?"

"Approve?" she cried; "but I don't very much that my sovereign bought anything half so splendid!"

"Your sovereign did not? I assure you it went for the purpose for which you gave it. I gave it, in your name, to a family in deep distress; but for the bonnet one of my own—"

"One of your own, as if I could be mistaken in real blood!"

"Then, if the blood be real it is only the better suited to the real worth of its wearer. John, you were nearer to the truth than I was; this wife of yours has a touch of the angel in her, but she is a far better thing for this unangelic world of ours, a true woman! And now for your New Year's gift my boy! There," and he put a packet into John junior's hand. "Read those at your leisure; they are the papers relating to the partnership which I have arranged between you and the head of the firm which you have already served so faithfully and so long; and now come in to luncheon, and let us drink to the health of Brownlow, Oakley and Company, not forgetting a bumper to Mrs. John Oakley, and her new winter bonnet."

CHRISTMAS BELLS.

HARK! the sound of bells is stealing
On the frosty evening air,
Thrilling us with solemn feeling,
While we breathe a silent prayer.

Long ago the Angels' voices
Sang those tidings o'er the earth,
And the heart of man rejoices
In the great Redeemer's birth.

Stay not in your task, ye fingers,
Do not let that music cease,
For it sounds like Angel singers,
To the earth proclaiming "Peace."

Hallowed memories rise before us,
As the cadence falls and swells,
And there seems a heavenly chorus
Blended with your notes, sweet bells!

Long departed forms and faces
Come and go with every strain,
Ah! if they could fill the places
In our hearts and homes again!

How we long to see them gather
Closely round the hearth to-night,
They who here on earth will gather
Meet again our longing sight!

But the notes which now are waking
Memories which pain us most,
Soothe our hearts, through all the aching,
For our loved ones are not lost.

And we hear, amidst the ringing,
As it floats far and wide,
Voices as of Angels singing
"Twas for them the Saviour died."

Ah, it is a tale of gladness,
That your rousing clamour tells,
Though there seems a strain of sadness
In your tones, sweet Christmas bells!

HELEN BURNSIDE.

ALL THE DIFFERENCE.

I MET her in the quiet lane
One Sabbath morning early;
The sun was bright, although the rain
Still glittered on the barley.
The lark was singing to his love,
The wild bells chimed their warning,
We paused awhile outside the gate,
We lingered till it was too late
To go to church that morning.

Again we met. The whisp'ring leaves
Glanced high in night and shadow,
The reapers piled their yellow sheaves,
The bees hummed o'er the meadow.
The royal sun rose up in state,
Our marriage day adorning;
The bells rang out; wide stood the gate,
And neither of us was too late
To go to church that morning.

Clement the Tailor.

A SHORT STORY OF A LONG LIFE.
BY JOHN BAKER HOPKINS.
Author of "A Reasonable Faith," &c., &c.

CHAPTER I.



Y mine is Clement Maskell. I am to tell the story of my life. According to a certificate of baptism, I was born seventy-two years ago. Don't be alarmed. My story will not be long. Did you ever make a journey by sea? Whilst the ship is in port and getting out of port all is bustle and excitement. When land is out of sight, and the good ship is a tiny speck on the ocean, there is nothing to do, and the days are wearisome. The voyagers talk about the land they have left, and the land to which they are journeying. Life at sea, life between port and port is almost a blank. And my life has been in this, and other, things, like unto the life of a voyager. In early manhood I left port, and for forty years I have been sailing on the waste of waters. I dare say many are in my position and live in the past and for the future.

My parents were Clement and Louisa Maskell, and I, an only child, was named after my father, who was a mariner. I never saw my parents. About a year after his marriage my father was lost at sea; the vessel of which he was mate being wrecked on the coast. The shock was fatal to my mother. She was prematurely confined, and died soon after my birth. I was an orphan, a fatherless and sisterless orphan. Only one who has been fatherless and motherless from infancy can conceive the lasting sadness and sorrow that is comprehended in that little word orphan. People said that as I had not known a parents' love, I should never feel the loss. They were wrong. I am old, very old, but I still feel the affliction. I often think how much happier I should have been if my parents had lived long enough for me to have seen them, and to have had some remembrance of them. I am old, very old, yet I yearn for the love of father and mother, and I suppose, surely it cannot be but an old man's dream, that I shall know them, and be known by them in that better land where the weary are at rest and there is joy for evermore.

Until my fifth year I was under the care of an aunt. I have an indistinct but indelible impression that my childhood was unhappy. Probably my aunt was not so motherly as she should have been. I was glad to leave her and become an inmate of "The Asylum for Bereaved Children," and after that she took no more notice of me and emigrated to America without a word of farewell.

I recollect, as though it were but yesterday, my first day at the asylum. I recollect being washed and dressed by my aunt and taken to the asylum. I recollect that it was raining, and that my aunt tried to make a bargain for a luckey-coach, but, refusing the terms, we walked. I recollect that my aunt was cross, and that I was tired and wet. I recollect being received by the matron, and that I thought her very fat, and that she took me into a room and clothed me with asylum clothing, and told me that my number was 92. I recollect being taken before the committee, that the committee consisted of half a dozen portly gentlemen, who looked at me through their spectacles, and that the chairman patted me on the head and told me to be a good boy. I recollect the dinner and how confused I was at the novelty of the scene. I recollect the playground after dinner, and how the boys crowded round the new boy, and asked me all sorts of questions, and particularly whether I had a motherliving. I think it was then I had the first dim perception of my utter loneliness. I recollect the afternoon school, and how long it seemed. I recollect the prayers before going to bed, and that whilst the hymn was being sung, I thought of the playground question, "Had I a mother?" I recollect the going to bed, and how I could not talk to my comrades and how I cried myself to sleep. I don't know why I cried. I did not want to go back to my aunt. I think it must have been the playground question, "Had I a mother?" that made me cry.

I remained in the Asylum for nine years. I was well fed, well clothed, well cared for, and fairly educated. Nothing was neglected save the heart. I became a creature of discipline, a mere human machine. Other boys had homes or friends to visit during the holidays. They had brothers and sisters to love and think of. I was alone in the world. Outside the asylum there was no one who cared for Clement Maskell, and in the asylum I was human machine No. 92. I was neither happy nor unhappy. I was No. 92, without associations and without expectations. Unlike my comrades, I did not look forward to the time when I should go forth from the asylum. My heart was dormant, and knew not fear or hope. Intellectually I was not dull or apathetic. I was a quick learner, and generally at the top of my class. I was year after year decorated with the good conduct badge. No. 92 was the most orderly working machine in the Asylum. But for the Asylum I might have been a street vagrant, uneducated and corrupt in morals. But there was any compensation for the total neglect of the affections? Is not the worst boy better than the best machine? Was not No. 92 a machine, a mere creature of discipline? Would that the voice of an old man could be heard by those who are charged with the training and care of the friendless. It is a fearful thing to treat the child as a machine, and pay no heed to the affections. Bad it is when the mind is untainted, but it is far, far worse, when the heart is neglected. I will go on with my tale, but the darkness of the nine years when I was No. 92 of the Asylum, when I was a creature of discipline, a mere machine, a well-cared for, kindly-treated, talking, thinking machine, yet rests upon me, and I cannot help speaking of it.

A month before I left the Asylum I was taken before the Committee and was informed by the Chairman that in consideration of my good conduct, I was to be apprenticed to a trade, and I was asked if I had any preference. I had never thought of the subject, and honestly answered no. The Chairman, who was a wholesale dealer in cloth, suggested the tailoring trade. He said that I should be always able to earn a good living, and that he had the opportunity of putting me in charge of an excellent and skilful master. Of course I assented, as I should have done to any other proposition. It was soon known in the Asylum what was to be my calling, and I was nicknamed "Clem the Tailor," and I was so called for years afterwards.

I was an in-door apprentice, and there was no great change of life. From being No. 92, an asylum machine, I became Clement, a clothes-making machine. Instead of some hours on the form at my books, I had so many hours on the board at my needle. My master was a conscientious man and took great pains to teach me the trade. He was a strict disciplinarian, and probably it never occurred to him that his apprentice needed any heart culture. I might have formed some friendship with my fellow-apprentices and workmen, but they called me a charity brat and jeered at me as "Clem the Tailor." I had not the sense to laugh at them, but shunned them and kept myself to myself. No wonder that I was disliked. No wonder that I was treated as a machine. What better than a machine is a youth with a dead or dormant heart? Oh! if I had ever been aware, even for one brief hour, of the love of father or mother! I know too well, too well, how true is the word of the poet, that it is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved.

When I was eighteen my master got into difficulties and became bankrupt. My indentures were transferred to another who had no room for me in his house. I was therefore paid half-price for my work, and had to lodge and board at my own cost. This change gave me satisfaction. I liked to be alone. My spare hours were devoted to study and reading. Why I persistently and amidst difficulties continued the cultivation of my mind I know not. It was not from love of books. Before a man can love the dead who yet speak, he must love the living. I was not prompted by any ambition, for I knew not the meaning of the phrase that "Knowledge is Power." I had no desire for power. I had no idea that No. 92 of the Asylum and Clem the clothes-making machine, would ever be anything else than a machine. I knew intellectually that man is not a mere machine, and that he is even something higher than a dog, but I did not know this in my heart. To me man was nothing more than a curious and clever machine.

On my twentieth birthday the spell was broken, and the heart, so long dormant, was awakened. I knew it was my birthday, because when I left the Asylum I had given to me a certificate of my baptism. My birthday was to me the same as any other day. Who was there to wish me many happy returns? What did it signify to Asylum machine No. 92 or to the clothes-making machine called "Clem the Tailor" that it began to work on such a day of such a month, and that it had been working for twenty years?

My twentieth birthday was on a Saturday, the day for taking home work and a busy day in the shop. It was a showery, rainy day, and I thought, as I always did in wet weather, of the one of very few incidents in my career, the journey with my aunt to the asylum. It was not so much rain as a thick and falling mist. We had lights in the shop early in the morning, and by two o'clock it was as dark as night. No Londoner has seen a more dark and dismal November day. About three o'clock the rain, or rather the falling of the mist, ceased, and it became foggy. Not gradually, but suddenly, the great city was filled with a dense fog, with the horrid mixture of cloud and smoke that I believe is peculiar to London. It found its way through every crevice. Even the shop was full of it, and the people and things in it were indistinct at a few yards distance. Our shop was in a street on the river side of the Strand, and we were used to fogs in November, but on that Saturday London was in thick darkness that might be felt. The ordinary noise of the traffic soon ceased, and in place of it were the hoarse cries of those who, at imminent risk of limb and life, were, with the aid of torches, trying to find their way home. Very few of the workpeople came in, and these few were so scared and worn out that they asked, and readily obtained, permission to remain in the shop until the fog cleared off, or until morning. It was pitiable to think of the anxiety of families, but better a whole night of anxiety than to brave the awful darkness. The hours wore on, and still no abatement of the fog. We had just heard, and very faintly, the church clock strike the midnight hour, when I determined to go home. I don't know why. Perhaps I was weary of the complaints and worry of those who were fidgety and anxious about their families and friends. There was no one to be anxious about me, and there was no reason why I should not have remained till morning. But in spite of all entreaties and warnings I sallied forth. I was so bent upon doing it, that only force could have restrained me, although I knew that my conduct was rash and obstinate.

I carried with me a stout stick and a small lantern. When outside the shop I hesitated for a moment, and then went on, keeping to the houses by touching them with my stick, and holding the lantern in my other hand. The light of the lantern was useless, and before I reached the Strand I fell and broke it. Again I hesitated, and should have returned, but I was ashamed to do so after my unjustifiable obstinacy. I got into the Strand, and in a few minutes I was in the middle of the road, not knowing whither I was going. I ran against a vehicle of

some kind, but got clear of it, or rather it got clear of me. How long I remained in the road I cannot tell, but it seemed as though I should never again find the pavement. I lived at Kenington, and I wished to cross the river by Westminster-bridge. When at last I was again on the footway, which I knew by touching some houses, I felt confident that I was in the right direction, and pursued my way as steadily as I could. From the time I was walking I must have passed over a great deal of ground, but I could find no indication of an approach to the bridge. I determined to knock at a house and ascertain where I was, and perhaps ask for shelter. Just then I heard a cry close to me. It was the voice of a woman.

"Oh! help me. Will anyone help me? I am lost. I am dying."

"Where are you?" I asked.

"Here, here, do come to me."

I bade the woman keep on calling, and in a few minutes, guided by her voice, I reached her.

"Oh! whoever you are, do not leave me. I shall die."

I tried to soothe the woman, and begged of her to be calm, and promised that I would see her to a place of safety.

"Oh! do not leave me. I am an orphan girl. Oh! do take compassion on me. Oh! take me to my home."

"An orphan! How that word startled me. An orphan! I was no longer alone in the world. In the moment of darkness and gloom all around me there was light in my heart. An orphan! I sprang from death unto life. I held in my arms a fellow creature whom I loved. Yes loved, loved, loved. Whom I had never seen before, but whom I should have loved with a wild, passionate love, if we had been separated in the black fog, and I had never seen her. In an instant of time all my past life was before me. In that instant I felt all the loneliness of orphanage as

with mystick. Splash, splash! We were by the edge of the water. Esther muttered, "God have mercy upon us." I again struck the water and then turned round. I knew how treacherous was the fog, and made Esther go down on her hands and knees and waded in that way for a few yards. We came upon a wooden structure; I knew it was wood by striking it with my stick. It was a low building, and after a while we found the entrance. It was a boat shed, and two or three wherries were in it. We crept into the refuge. Esther laid down by a boat, still holding fast by my hand. Then she told me again and again her name and address, lest she should die. I did what I could to comfort her. I told her the story of my life. I told her how lonely I had been and that now I was no longer alone. I could not think of the unfitness of the time. I was obliged to speak, or my heart would have burst.

Hark! what is that? It is like the flapping of a sail. What is it? Oh, the blessed wind, the blessed wind has come at last. Wind and rain! Oh, the blessed wind and rain. As quickly as the fog had come so it went. Ere the dawn of morning the darkness that might be felt had passed away, and I took Esther to her home.

I went home, but not to sleep. I had been dead, and behold I was alive. I had been alone in the world for twenty years and now I was not alone. I dressed and went to church from habit. But that day I did not pray as a machine. I was human now, and I could worship Our Father in Heaven.

CHAPTER II.

Esther had a long and serious illness, and I do not believe that her constitution ever recovered from the suffering and exposure of that terrible November night. However by the spring she appeared comparatively well, and I was happy.

I loved Esther before I knew the nature of my love. I found that she lived with her sister, who was married to a City clerk. They were very poor, and it was necessary for the women to do what they could to add to the small income of the husband. I was welcomed heartily, and somehow from the first it was understood that I was Esther's lover, and that some day we were to be married. It was after some weeks, and when Esther was recovering, that I began to think of the days when we should be man and wife. I certainly never proposed marriage to Esther. It was, as I have said, understood by all that she was to be my wife.

Had Esther been unworthy of affection I should have loved her with wild and uncontrollable passion. Happily she was worthy of the most devoted love. She was pure, high-minded, unselfish, true, trusting woman. She had received a moderate education, had read many books, and her thoughts and actions were chaste and elevated. Her piety was equally sincere and unaffected. It was not at once that I knew what a priceless treasure I had found in the black November fog.

It was, too, only by degrees that I became conscious that Esther was beautiful. As my affection became less excited and more settled, I noted how my darling excelled in grace and loveliness. Do you want a picture of her? Here is her portrait, taken when she was twenty-one, a year after we met. She was tall and slim. Her eyes were blue—true blue—and her hair was the lightest shade of brown. She was always pale, but a countenance of ineffable content and sweetness made her face pleasant and joyous to look upon. But the painter could not paint her, and I cannot describe her. I see her now as I have seen her constantly for more than fifty years, and my description is mocked by the cherished vision.

I was another man. I regretted my past coldness. I went to the Asylum. The master was new, the matron was new, the boys were new. There was not a familiar face. But I visited the familiar haunts. No. 92. I went into the dormitory in which I had slept for nine years. I went to the chapel. I knelt where No. 92 had knelt, Sunday after Sunday, for nine years. My lips moved not, but my heart was not still. I was no longer a praying machine.

All things were changed to me or rather I was changed to them. I now understood why the birds greeted the sun with song. The shining of the stars was no longer voiceless. I had a passion for Nature. I could I went into the fields. I had done so in days of yore to botanise, but now it was to pay homage to the Creator by feeling how all the works of His hand their use and beauty reflect His wisdom and glory. I bought birds. I bought a dog. I was impatient until I could afford a little globe of gold and silver fish. My windows were filled with plants. My thirst for objects of affection was insatiable.

I read less, but the books were dear to me. The authors were now living souls, my masters whom I revered, my older brethren whom I loved as well as revered. I sought out my old shop acquaintances and forced my friendship on them. I told them that "Clem the Tailor" was no longer a mere clothes-making machine.

But because I loved all things so much I did not love Esther less. I loved her with an idolatrous love. Oh, idol of clay, idol of clay, how I loved you; idol no longer, but higher, far higher. And strange that at the time when I loved Esther with an idolatrous affection, and when my freshly awakened heart was overflowing with love for people and things, I yearned, with a sickening yearning, for the love of father and mother. I thought then that it would have crowned my happiness if father or mother had looked upon me even for an hour, or if I had seen them and remembered them ever so dimly. I tried to find out my aunt, for she might be able to tell me something of my mother's or my father's features, but



"DIE SHE?"

I had never, never felt it before; but I also felt that I was no more alone in the world; I was with an orphan who, in danger and distress, had cried to me for help.

I asked her who she was, and where she wanted to go. Her name she told me was Esther Horton, that she lived in the Borough; that she was a needlewoman, and had her work with her when she was lost in the fog. Strangely enough she was employed at my shop. I told her that my name was Clement Maskell, that I belonged to the shop she worked for; that I too was an orphan, and that I would rather die than leave her. I proposed to knock at the first door we came to and beg for a few hours shelter.

But how to find a house? I had left the wall or house against which I had stood in order to get to Esther, who I suppose was in the roadway. We walked on carefully and warily till we were stopped by a chain. Then we halted. Oh, what noise was that? Yes, it was the washing of the tide against the shore. We were by the river side. For the first time that night, for the first time in my life I was alarmed. Now, when I had something, and so much to live for, there was Death so close at hand. Esther, too, was aware of the danger and shuddered.

"Pray for me, pray for us both, pray that God may guide us."

Pray? I had been to church every Sunday since I was five years old. For nine years I had heard prayers read night and morning. But I had never thought of praying except as a machine would pray.

"Pray, oh, pray that God will help us." So I knelt down. I had no idea of praying in any other attitude. I implored for help and mercy, and holding Esther tightly with one hand, I groped along, hitting the ground with my stick in the manner of a blind man. So on for a few minutes that appeared as hours. Oh, what is that? I stooped a little, and hit hard

my aunt had died in America. Then I prayed that I might see my father and my mother in a dream, but the dream came not. And all this while I loved Esther with an idolatrous love.

As I have said, when I was 92 in the asylum I was neither happy nor unhappy. After I knew Esther I was happy but no longer free from care. What if my health should fail? what if trade became slack and I could not find work to do? what if Esther became sick and died? what if anything prevented our marriage? I no more slept the undisturbed sleep of No. 92 or of Clem the clothes making machine. Did I regret the freedom from care? Worse than the worst hell is the idea of death, complete death! My heart was alive, and living it must needs have care as well as joy. If the acorn will live—will become a living tree, it must suffer the storms of winter as well as be gladdened by the sunshine of summer.

Esther and I were married on my twenty-first birthday. It was not a prudent marriage. We had no money in store, but I would not wait. However, I was a skilled workman, and had plenty of work to do. We lived in pleasant rooms in the old neighbourhood of Kennington. The love deepened day by day, for we were lovers still, and our hearts and minds seemed to have become one. We were possessed by the same thoughts and the same affections. Then came the happy event, the birth of a child. For months before the birth I was tormented with a sickening fear. Would the child of the orphans be an orphan? I never left home without a misgiving that an accident might happen to me. I grew painfully thin. I feared to cross the road. I had no trust in Supreme Love and Wisdom. I imagined that I was my own keeper. Well, my fears were groundless. Our little girl, whom we called Esther, was not an orphan.

I dare not, I cannot tell you of the two years that followed the birth of our little Esther. Did you ever watch a vessel on a rough sea? It is rudely tossed from wave to wave. There is a moment, only a moment, when betwixt the mighty waves the vessel is at rest. Those two years, with Esther and our child, were the moments of rest in my life. We were never tired of playing with her or of watching her whilst she slept. Oh, so eager was our look of love that we might almost have seen the growth of our darling from second to second.

Well, well, all this concerns not my story. They are an old man's lingering remembrances. What remains to be told, shall be told quickly.

CHAPTER III.

We had very few friends. Soon after our marriage Esther's sister emigrated to America, and her husband prospered as a farmer. We had met at their rooms Mr. Charles Oldershaw, an agreeable man, a few years my senior. He was a commercial traveller, and when he was in town he was an almost daily visitor at our house. He was kind and cheerful, and we called him Brother Charlie. I am persuaded that Esther did not like him as much as I did, but she liked him much for my sake. I needed some brotherly affection, some male companionship, and Charlie became very dear to me. Then he took so deep an interest in my welfare. He constantly urged me to begin business on my own account. He said that it was a shame for a man of my intellect to be a journeyman, and that for the sake of my wife and child I ought to do better. He even offered to become security for the necessary capital to begin a small business. Esther disapproved of the scheme. She maintained that I ought not to incur the risk of trading on borrowed capital, which if I lost I could not hope to repay. She said, too, a great deal about doing what I found to do, and not going out of my way to seek another position. For awhile Esther prevailed, though I was by no means convinced that she was right. Every week I grew more and more discontented with my earnings. I was of opinion that Charlie was right, and that Esther did not appreciate my ability. In the end I determined to adopt Charlie's advice, and for once, and once only, to act contrary to the wishes of Esther. I would not enter into a great speculation. I took a small shop in Kennington, and borrowed £150 from Mr. Marks, to whom I was introduced by Charlie, and who lent it to me on my friends' security.

The business did not prosper. I found that I could not get custom unless I gave credit, and with my small capital I could not give much credit. I made a few bad debts, and in a year I had lost the £150. I saw when it was too late how sound had been the advice of Esther. I gave up the business, and became a journeyman. Mr. Marks promised to take his money in small instalments, but only on condition that I signed a judgment, which he told me was a mere formality, and of the consequences of which I had not the least conception.

We went into cheap apartments. Esther insisted upon doing some needlework, and we were again happy. We earned enough to keep us, and to put by sufficient to meet the quarterly instalments of my debt. Charlie was exceedingly sorry for the failure of the enterprise, and regretted that he could not pay the lost money. I

had no regrets. I could in two or three years pay what I owed, and I was happy and content.

It was my 25th birthday, and a Saturday. We had taken the work home early, for we were to have a merry evening. Charlie was to sup with us. It was dreary weather, and Esther and I were forcibly reminded of the dark, dismal day and the thick fog, five years ago. When I got home I found a note from Charlie, saying that he was obliged to go into the country, and could not join us. So we sat down to tea without him. There was a bright fire in the grate, and the kettle was singing merrily, as she had done all the day, something about "many happy turns for papa dear." I was standing at the table, cutting her piece of cake. "Now, then, who wants cake?"

At that moment there was a knock at the door and two men entered. "Who did they want?" "Mr. Maskell." "What could Mr. Maskell do for them?" "One of them brought a paper out of his pocket. 'Could I settle?' 'Settle what?' 'The £150 due to Mr. Marks, with costs.' Then I knew what had happened. I was a prisoner. Esther bore it bravely. She was pale and tearful, but for my sake calm and even hopeful. She would go to Mr. Marks, and she was sure he would release me. How unfortunate that Charlie was from town. Then I kissed the wondering child, who asked me to come home soon for a game; then I kissed Esther, and I went out into the dark night, and was taken to the Fleet. Too crushed for thought, I was like a man in a dream. Alas! it was not a dream but a dead reality.

Mr. Marks was immovable. He would not heed the pleadings of Esther, and he disregarded the arguments of Charlie. He must have the money or valid security. My wife visited me daily, and so did Charlie, when he was in town. He bade me be of good cheer, as he would soon find the cash or else the security. Meanwhile he gave me money enough for my support in prison. He

Clem, of me. Oh! Clem, you will kill me if you are not calm.—Your loving wife,

ESTHER.

The morrow came, and I heard how my little one had died the previous afternoon, and how not long before she died she had asked for papa. Calm! God forgive me. I cursed the hour I was born. I cursed my creditor, and prayed that he might suffer as I had suffered. Then I looked at Esther, and my passion was over. I had to comfort her, and she me. I could not again look upon the child, I could not even look upon her dead. Esther gave me a lock of her fair hair. Precious relic! but I needed nought to keep my darling fresh in my memory.

My wife showed the courage that only a true woman can show. In a week or two she was placid, and spoke of our lost one with the full assurance of the meeting in heaven. Esther's piety was deep and heartfelt, and was a power in the hour of trial. Charlie said that in a few days, certainly within a fortnight, I should be released. We resolved then to leave England, and join Esther's sister in America. Again the clouds were breaking, and I looked hopefully to the future.

Must I go on? Quickly, quickly, then, quickly let the rest be told, or I shall die or go mad in the telling.

Esther came to me about a fortnight after the death of our little one. I saw that she had been crying, and her agitation was extreme. I besought her to let me know if anything had happened. She said no, and I believed her, and supposed she was grieving for the child. I bade her remember our compact, how for her sake I had borne our loss calmly, and how for my sake she should be calm. I told her how fearful had been my sufferings. If she was unhappy my misery would be too great for endurance.

"Oh Clem, then, dear Clem, you love me, you love me still."

"Esther, surely you have never doubted my affection. Was I not alone in the world when we met? Are you not all in all to me? Darling, you cannot doubt my love."

"Clem, dearest husband!"—she said, embracing me; "I doubt you not, I must have been mad. But I am myself again. Forgive me darling, oh forgive me."

In subsequent visits Esther did not allude to this outburst of grief, but I could not forget it, or help noticing that she was drooping and out of health. In a few months she expected a second time to be a mother, and this made me the more solicitous to be free and at work.

It was the last day in January, and I had been in prison for more than two months. Esther as usual came to visit me as soon as the gates were open. She could not speak, but put a letter in my hand. It was from Charlie, saying that at length all was arranged and that I should be released that day or the next. The good news almost paralysed me, and I found relief in tears, which surely were not unmanly. Perhaps our next meeting would be at home, or if not, there would be one more only within the walls of a prison. It is curious, I have often thought of it since, that day's parting was peculiarly hard, and I could not restrain my emotion when the moment came to bid farewell till the morrow.

No release came that night. Next day Esther did not come. I presumed that she was engaged about my discharge from custody, but as the day wore on I began to feel an inexplicable alarm. The night passed and not a word from Esther. I was haggard and worn in the morning, so that I excited the compassion of my fellow-prisoners. I was about, through the kindness of a gaoler, to despatch a messenger to Kennington, when a letter was put into my hand. I feared to open it. When, at length, I read it, I became insensible and fell.

The letter was from the landlady of the house. It stated that Esther had been out on the previous day, that she had had a fall, that she was brought home in a state of unconsciousness, that she was still unconscious, that the doctor had great hopes of her recovery, but there was danger.

When I came to, the doctor and the governor were standing by me. The doctor bade me be of good cheer as there was a chance of my wife recovering, but that I could not see her until I was composed.

Could not see her! Then the governor told me I was released. I started up from my recumbent position, and I prayed to let me depart that moment. They pitied my condition, and the governor himself led me to the gates, and dismissed me, putting money into my hand for a coach.

But I could not wait for a coach. It was too slow for my anxiety. I ran through the streets so fast, that the people stood to look at me. I was running for life and for more than life. I reached the house. For one moment, and for one moment only, I hesitated to knock. The door was opened promptly. Was she yet alive, I asked, or rather the words hissed from my lips. Yes, she was living.

I entered the chamber softly. I knew, I knew it was a chamber of death. A doctor was there, and a clergyman, and on the bed propped up with pillows was Esther. How I went forward, and how I knelt by her, and how I



WINTER.

would have helped me at home, but Esther would not accept any aid. Charlie too had his troubles. He was thrown out of his gig and hurt his hand so that he could not use it for days. I wrote his letters for him. One was rather a delicate letter. It was to a girl whom he loved, and who had written to him angrily because she had heard that he had formerly loved some one else. He dictated a frank manly letter, in which he confessed his former attentions to an unworthy object, but avowed that his heart was now wholly possessed by the girl he was addressing. Poor fellow, it was evidently not without reluctance that he had to tell me of this trouble. But too soon I had such sorrow of my own that I could not sympathise with the troubles of my friend.

I had been four weeks a prisoner when Esther told me that our child was unwell. I was greatly alarmed, but she assured me the illness was not serious, and offered to bring the darling to see me. To that I objected. I did not wish my child to have any other than happy memories of her father. Next day Esther came late, and did not remain long. The child was worse, and the slight illness had developed into fever. Oh, my agony! To get out for a few hours to see my child I would have given years of my life. I despatched a messenger to Mr. Marks, but he was unmoved; next day Esther came not. I knew what that meant before I got her note at night:—"My own dear Clem,—As you love me, be a man. I can bear all if you bear it bravely. If not, my heart will break. Oh! Clem, dear, as you love do not grieve. You know what has happened. Oh! Clem, dear; oh, dearest husband, our little one has gone before us. To-morrow I will tell you all about it. Only think to-night, dear

took her hand and kissed it. I knew not. Why my heart did not break I know not. But I was marvelously calm in my actions, though there was an awful tempest within.

Soon Esther, who had been for hours unconscious, opened her eyes and looked on me.

"Oh darling, Clem, dear Clem, you are home; I knew you would come."

And she took my hand and drew it down upon her bosom. I could not have spoken a word to save her life and my own.

"Clem, dear, promise to bear even this as becomes a Christian man, and I shall be happy."

"I could not speak to her. I tried, but I could not."

"Clem, dear husband, promise me, promise me, so that where I go, you may come. Clem dear, promise to bear this—"

Her voice was a whisper, and her utterance slow.

"Yes Esther, oh, yes, I promise. But you will get better darling, you will get better!"

She held me yet tighter to her bosom. I thought she must be stronger than she seemed, so hardly did she press my head on her neck.

"I am so happy, my darling. 'Now, oh Lord! lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace.'"

Very clearly she whispered these words, and after a pause she sighed twice.

She was dead, and I knew it not. They told me she was dead. I screamed a horrible scream. I lifted up the corpse in my arms, I kissed it, and fell down with it on the bed.

After that I remember nothing for weeks. I had fever and was delirious, but I got the better of the sickness and my reason was restored.

The first time I went out I visited the grave of my wife. I forgot not my promise, and I bore the affliction with patience.

I was again alone in the world. No, no, not alone. I was not an orphan now. I had remembrances, I had loved. I had treasure in heaven. Death that destroys the body has no power over the affections.

Esther and my little one were in a far country, which I seek, and whither I go.

CHAPTER IV.

Five years after the death of my wife I was called upon by a gentleman, who I knew from his dress to be a clergyman. He asked if my name was Clement Maskell, known as "Clem the Tailor." I replied that it was. He then said that he had been for months searching for me, and that he was charged to deliver a solemn and important message.

"Did I remember Charles Oldershaw?" Yes, one of my dearest friends. I had made many many inquiries about him, but I had never seen him or heard of him since the death of my wife.

Then the clergyman told me that Charlie was dead, "but he had died in prison, and that on his death-bed he had made a confession, which he had taken down, and which Charlie had besought him to deliver to me. The clergyman handed me a paper, and I read as follows:—

"I am now dying, and I desire to confess a fearful crime, for which I cannot hope to be forgiven by man. I dare not hope for the forgiveness of him whom I have wronged. I loved Esther before she became the wife of Clement Maskell, and I loved her with a wicked love after she became his wife. I determined to do all that I could to get her from her husband. I persuaded him to go into business. I lent him the money through an agent. I caused him to make bad debts, and so ruined his business. I caused him to be arrested and kept in prison. By means of a letter which I got Clement to write, I endeavoured to make Esther think that her husband was faithless. That letter was sent to her, but beyond giving her some days of pain it failed in its effect. In a moment of passion I declared my love, and she ordered me from her room, and forbade me ever to speak to her again. I left her, awed by her virtuous rage, but more determined to accomplish my foul purpose. On the day when she supposed her husband was to be released I sent her a letter in a feigned hand-writing, purporting to come from Marks, the creditor, bidding her to meet him in the City in the evening to receive her husband's discharge. She came to the appointed place. She was shown into a room, and there she found me and not Marks. With a sudden effort she flung me from her, and before I could recover myself, opened the window and leapt out. The height was not great, yet I was sure that she was killed and that I was a murderer. In great dread I looked out and saw that she had risen and was walking, or rather running, from the place. I made inquiries and heard that she had reached home, but that there was little hope of her living. I was overcome with remorse. I bade Marks send a release for Clement, and I fled from London. In two days I learnt the fatal termination of my wicked conduct, and I knew that I had murdered Esther. I went out of England; I changed my name; I remained for three years in America, but I could not rest. I became reckless. I drank and gambled, and got into such difficulties that I was forced to leave America. I returned to England. I could not seek honest employment for fear I should become known, and that I should be denounced by Marks, who knew my guilt. I went from bad to worse. I became the associate of rogues. I was implicated in robbery, and was sentenced to a long imprisonment. In prison I am dying, and I make this confession, which I desire may be made known to Clement Maskell. I do not hope that he will forgive me. He must curse my name and my memory."

"Signed) CHARLES OLDERSHAW. I did not curse him even then. I do not curse him now. He wronged me fairly. He murdered my wife, but I do not curse him. For all the sorrow and suffering of more than forty years I do not curse him. Esther, darling, I do not curse him for your sake."

I have no more to tell of. All this happened upwards of forty years ago, and it is the whole story of my life. I am getting more and more feeble. The orphan will soon be with you, oh, father and mother. Oh, little

child, your father is coming home to you. Oh, Esther, we shall soon meet; never, never more to part—never, never more to sorrow."

I often repeat the dying words of Esther, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace." How long, oh Lord, shall I yet tarry? How weak and failing I am becoming from day to day. The long voyage is nearly over. I am in sight of the better land. Father, mother, child and wife, await my coming. I am so happy, I am so near to home. Perhaps to-morrow I shall arrive; perhaps to-night. Oh, Esther darling, I am so happy. Now, even now, I am with you.

THE END.

Christmas Week.

BY MRS. ALFRED WATNEY.



"SCATTER your crumbs, says Alfred Crowquill,

"Amidst the freezing sleet and snow,
The timid robin comes;
In pity give him not away,
But scatter out your crumbs."

And leave your door upon the latch
For whoever comes;
The poorer they, more welcome give,
And scatter out your crumbs."

All have to spare, none are too poor,
When we live with winter comes,
The loaf is never all your own,
Then scatter out your crumbs."

Soon winter falls upon your life,
The day of reckoning comes;
Against your sins by high decree,
Are weighed, those scattered crumbs."

It was just the winter for crumb scattering, and I think the crumbs at Bolton Grange had been pretty fairly scattered that Christmas week. The poor had not been forgotten, while the rich were feasting there.

There was snow on the ground, "old January" had need come,

"Wrapped well

In many weeds to keep the cold away."
The fields were clothed as Milton says, in "A wintery veil of maiden white."

The trees were dressed in frosted snow flakes, and a fanciful mind might well imagine that the long even box hedges were thick marble walls, while the wide open moor stretching away far beyond the Grange grounds on the left, looked like a sea of foam. There were but few prominent landmarks, and the only dark objects on which the eye could rest, were the rolling river, and the blacksmith's forge, the latter throwing a crimson and welcome glare across the snow covered road.

A bright contrast to this cold and cheerless outdoor scene was the large oak parlour at the Grange on this particular afternoon, the afternoon of the 30th December 1867, for there, round a blazing fire, were gathered all the unmarried members of the Bolton family, some young lady friends who were staying in the house, and dear Aunt Hester.

The week had been a very gay one, this evening was to be a rest. The church and the old Grange had been decorated in a very artistic manner, the coral like holly berries were flashing in the ruddy light of the oak parlour log as bright and fresh as they did the evening they were put up, the ivy looked as green, and the mistletoe as perky as the dark oak panelling as on the old-service tree and turret tower from which they had been taken. The Christmas pudding had been tasted, the Boar's head duly admired, snap-dragon played at, for the Squire of Bolton was a strict observer of all ancient customs, and the Christmas ball was over; so charades and a dance to welcome the new year in, were the only festivities to look forward to. They girls were tired; they had been engaged during the morning studying their parts, and after luncheon in arranging and deciding upon their costumes, so they now assembled in Aunt Hester's sanctum, for a cup of early tea and a chat, before the men returned from shooting, and the hour of dressing for dinner arrived.

Mabel was there, the "Sister Mabel" of the juveniles, the "Dear Mabel" of the elder branches, and the "Beautiful Mabel" of Sir Edward Cardewine, who, having slightly sprained his ankle in his anxiety to obtain the first branch of mistletoe for his lady-love, was on the sick list, and therefore invited by universal consent into the oak parlour. He sat on the old-fashioned couch between Aunt Hester and Mabel, and as the former was a little deaf she was supposed not to hear any of the pretty things which were from time to time whispered in her niece's ears. All I can say is, that if her arctic powers were keener than her friends in general imagined them to be, she possessed a vast amount of discretion, for no one betrayed a love secret committed either wittingly or unwittingly to her custody. It might, perchance, be that there were sundry tender reminiscences of a certain Captain Cardewine, who had died in India, influencing her reticence in all Cupid's concerns.

There was one other male individual present, Charles Danvers, the curate of St. Mary's, Bolton, but as Charley in the family vault, had first of all been school friends, and afterwards college companions, Charley, or "the tame rabbit" as Sir Edward called him, had the run of the Grange, and a considerable share of the affection Mrs. Bolton had felt for her first born son was transferred

to the good, noble, self-sacrificing young fellow who has nursed her boy with a woman's care during his last illness on the Continent, and brought his dead body over to Bolton to rest with the bones of his ancestors. Rumour said the Squire's lady would not have awarded an unwilling consent had the curate aspired to Mabel's affections instead of the owner of Carwardine Hall, but Mabel and Charley had always been on too brotherly and sisterly terms, and the same many-tongued individual also affirmed that the gentle Lucy, the Squire's second daughter, would at no very prolonged period give Mr. Danvers the right of calling Mrs. Bolton Mother.

"Aunt Hester, this is just the right time for a story," cried Edith Bolton, a young lady of sixteen.

"Yes! Aunt Hester, the right time," re-echoed Charley pulling out his watch. "The Squire will not return from Holme Lacy for another hour, so do give us a story."

"Do, do, dear Aunt Hester," exclaimed some half dozen voices at once. Miss Hester Bolton, be it known, being always called aunt by all the young people who visited at the Grange.

Aunt Hester rose and proceeded to her desk.

"I will read you a tale; it is all about a dear, nice girl, whose happiness was destroyed for a time at least by the deceitful—"

"No such thing, Hester, you ought to be ashamed of yourself—" sounded through the room, and on looking towards the doorway, the party discovered Miss Bolton, the "Aunt Charlotte," of the Grange, the Squire's elder sister, fully equipped in out of door costume, looking, as Sir Edward declared, like Grim Death. She had, on charitable thoughts intent, been down through the snow to visit some of her poor pensioners; she was a good creature, but certainly had a rather stern, not to say at times, harsh manner of making her disapproval known to her hearers. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself," she repeated. "The children are sufficiently foolish and worldly" (two things, by the by, which seldom walk together in this world, but Miss Bolton was especially fond of associating them in her speech). "You need not read them any nonsense, and I am surprised to see you (with a look at Charley) here."

The bonnet and mantle withdrew, the door closed, and Aunt Hester, looking as if she was ashamed of herself, opened a small roll of yellow paper.

"You must remember that this tale, perfectly true in every circumstance, for I know the parties mentioned in it, was written out many years ago, at the time the circumstances occurred, and therefore the style will not be very modern," she prefaced, beginning at once to read in a clear sweet voice—

THE FALSE FRIEND.

"He holds me well;

The better shall my purpose work on him,
To make him thank me, love me, and reward me,
For making him egregiously an ass;
He is of a free and open nature,
That think men honest, that but seem to be so,
And will as tenderly be led by the nose
As asses are."

"Nous n'avons point de diable, assez diable pour tenir tête à une méchante femme," is the oft quoted remark of a celebrated French writer and this tale fully exemplifies the truth of his words.

At a small, beautiful village on the Sussex coast, there resided a family of the name of Acton. The village was called Milford. It was thinly populated, and there were but few persons of any county note living in the vicinity. Mr. Acton was one of those harmless, good-natured men who keep the even time of their own way without troubling their pates with the foibles or affairs of their neighbours. He was fond of society, though not able to get much at Milford, and never appeared to greater advantage than when surrounded by a circle of genial friends. He presided at his own table.

His lot in the matrimonial market had proved a fortunate one, the wife of his choice possessing good taste, an excellent disposition, active mind, and a very fair share of personal charms. They had been married several years, and as Providence had not thought fit to bless them with children, they adopted a niece of Mr. Acton's, Emily Herbert.

Emily was an exceedingly pretty girl, and she was what is far better, a very amiable one. Artless and unaffected in manner she was a general favourite with all classes, for no harsh remark or spiteful tale had ever been traced to her; she never censured where she could not praise, she knew that—

"They who credit crime, are those who feel
Their own hearts weak to unrestrained sin"

So she was charitably silent.

Milford, as I have already mentioned, was a small place. It contained but few of what in country parlance are termed "the Gentry." The few called on the Actons, and amongst them a family named Weaver, the professional man of Milford, and he had two gaudy, and being apparently quiet retiring, and unassuming in manner, Mrs. Acton was induced to cultivate their friendship for Emily.

Now both Anna and Clara Weaver were very different girls from what Mrs. Acton imagined them to be. They were by nature envious, spiteful, and vindictive, but possessing a tolerable share of discernment, and a large proportion of cunning. They soon discovered that they would be unwelcome at Acton Lodge if they gave way to their love of scandal, or displayed any of their malicious cleverness before Mrs. Acton; in her presence, therefore, they played the part of amiable modesty to perfection, and successfully imposed on Emily as well as on her aunt. But alas, poor Emily was fated to suffer bitterly from their perfidy.

About three years after the Actons came to Milford, a gentleman named Ellison purchased a hunting box in the neighbourhood. He was young, handsome, and gentlemanly, agreeable in society, and report said a man of large fortune. All the marriageable girls in Milford

set their caps at him: The Weavers amongst the rest, but it was very soon evident that his affections were centred on Emily Herbert, and neither Anna nor Clara Weaver, nor any other Milford young lady had the faintest possible chance of becoming Mrs. Edward Ellison until Miss Herbert thought proper to decline the honour. This, however, Emily had no intention of doing. Mr. Ellison was the only person she had ever felt the slightest partiality for, and when he proposed to her she frankly admitted it.

Ellison delighted with her avowal, agreed to it at once, and Emily, as if by coyness, no all the arrangements were made. A very handsome residence in the vicinity was taken, settlements were prepared, furniture was purchased, and Clara Weaver engaged to act the part of chief bridesmaid.

When Emily was sixteen, four months prior to their first arrival in Milford, she had received a proposal of marriage from a gentleman some years her senior, a man whose rank in life and prospects were considerably superior to her own, but as she did not feel the slightest affection for him, and very properly disliked the idea of entering a family who would most probably disdain her, she at once firmly rejected him.

He wrote to her several times on the subject, and these letters she now sealed up and confided to Clara Weaver, asking her to retain them until the Honourable Lionel Morton should return from Naples, for she did not deem it quite right, now she was actually engaged to Mr. Ellison, to keep another man's letters in her possession. Clara, of course promised to be faithful to the trust reposed in her. Mr. Ellison had heard rumours respecting Mr. Morton, and he had questioned Emily on the subject. Many girls of her age would have been glad to speak of the attentions of a man of Mr. Morton's rank, but Emily never liked to inflict pain on anyone, so, dreading Mr. Morton should hear on his return that she had said she had refused him, and that such a report would wound his feelings, she very unfortunately denied the whole affair. Far be it from me to defend the practice of fib telling, but surely, if ever there was an instance where an untruth could be told from good motives, this was one.

Emily paid dearly for her deviation from the right. When she gave the letters to Clara, she informed her of the conversation she had had with Mr. Ellison, and Clara took no notice of the subject at the time, but on her return home with the packet of letters, she mentioned the circumstance to her sister Anna, and then they set their wits to work to devise a plan for breaking off Emily's marriage with Ellison. The first thing they did was to open the parcel and read the letters. These letters they, who were adepts in penmanship, discovered could be effectively altered; a few words skillfully added, and one or two sentences carefully obliterated would make it appear that Emily instead of rejecting Mr. Morton had encouraged him. This they immediately did, and then their next step was to place the epistles in Mr. Weaver's hands, and get him to deliver them up to Ellison. Their father gladly undertook the mission, and on presenting them to Mr. Ellison, assured him that poor Clara had been deceived, and he was sorry to say, induced by the deep interest she felt in him to break the trust reposed in her by Miss Herbert, feeling convinced from various expressions which had fallen from Miss Herbert that he was ignorant of many things which he ought to be made acquainted with.

When Mr. Ellison came to the Weavers in order to have a little conversation with Clara on the subject, that young lady affected to feel much hurt at the step her sense of duty and her regard for him had obliged her to take. She said she knew the world would blame her for it, but still she really must tell him that Emily had often and often confessed to her that she never could love any one save Mr. Morton, that she was miserable at the idea of becoming Mr. Ellison's wife; but that her friends had influenced her to accept him.

Having been deceived by Emily in respect of Mr. Morton's proposal, Ellison, who had a great deal of jealousy in his nature, was at the present moment ready to credit any falsehoods the Weavers thought proper to state of her.

He had loved—still loved her very deeply; but he determined to decline marrying her; his pride was wounded (what man's would not have been) by the idea that a girl whom he thought so highly of, almost worshipped, had considered him a fitting object to delude.

Smarting under a sense of injury, he immediately went to Acton Lodge, stated that he had seen Mr. Morton's letters, and begged to decline the honour of a union with Miss Herbert.

Poor Emily, overcome with astonishment and sorrow, declared that the letters confided by her to Miss Weaver did not contain anything that ought to have excited his displeasure (she little knew of the alteration they had undergone), and she distinctly denied ever having made any confession to Clara; but all her protestations were made in vain. Ellison felt that having deceived him in the first instance with respect to the letters, it was possible, may probable, she was guilty of all laid to her charge by the Weavers; so he quitted the house, and in a few hours, Milford.

CHAPTER II.

"Alone in crowds to wander on,
And feel that all the charm is gone,
Which voices dearest, and eyes beloved,
Shed once around where'er we roved;
This, this the doom must be
Of all who've loved and lived to see
The few bright things they would have stay
For ever near them, fade away."

Moore.

Four years had passed since the events recorded in the last chapter took place, and the Actons were in Florence. Florence, beautiful Florence—

"A dream of love, a dream of light,
A glimpse, a gleam of fairy-land—

A haunt of glory meets the sight;
This some enchanted strand—
A circle where sorrow entereth not—
The home of beauty—a golden spot."

So sang Lamorne Blanchard, and Rogers declared that—

"Of all the fairest cities of the earth
None is so fair as Florence."

Numberless are the visions of departed genius conjured up by the very name of Florence. City of the mighty dead, within whose sacred precincts lie the ashes of Angelo, Alfieri, Machiavelli, and Massaccio! What dreams of Dante and the bard of Argos fill the mind—Galileo with his wondrous telescope on the top of Fiesole; Boccaccio, his "Decameron" amid the green fields and olive groves surrounding the city; Ceccano, and his pupil Giotto, Raphael, Titian, and Canova—all, all crowd the canvas! Cloudless skies, and magnificent palaces, whose splendours are reflected in the clear waters of the Arno, spacious squares, sparkling fountains, sculptured halls, and beautiful gardens are all presented to the imagination, as in one vast picture, directly the name of Florence is mentioned. The aged and the young, the simple and the gifted, the wanderer in search of knowledge, the idler seeking mere amusement, and even the careworn invalid who vainly hopes that the genial air of Italy will restore strength to the languid pulse and peace to the wounded spirit, agree in calling Florence a city of enchantment.

It was to seek for health that the Actons went there. They left Milford shortly after Mr. Ellison, in the hope that change of air and cheerful society would prevent Emily from dwelling too deeply on her disappointment. They visited Brighton and St. Leonards, Bath, Cheltenham, and most of the fashionable watering places in England. Two years went by in this manner, and for a while Emily struggled pretty successfully with her feelings. She contrived to appear tolerably cheerful when in her uncle and aunt's presence, but she grieved bitterly nevertheless. She received two advantageous offers and declined them—she had loved once, and she could love no more. Carlyle, in his "Sartor Resartus," observes, "The human mind is not a properly exhibit but one love. The first love, which is infinite, can be followed by no second which is like unto it." Emily was of the same opinion as the author of "Herr Teufelsdröckh," and she steadfastly refused to comply with her aunt's wishes in accepting another man's proposals.

A report reached them of Ellison's marriage. He had met with a beautiful Italian, and they were now living in Paris. "Love will hope when reason would despair," and it soon became painfully evident to the Actons that Emily had cherished the idea of Ellison's return. She had been dwelling on the hope of his fulfilling his broken vows at some future period, and hence the true cause of her seeming cheerful health, and the rumour of her lover's marriage gave a final blow to her happiness. Her strength decreased daily. The most eminent medical men in town were consulted, she was ordered to Devonshire, became gradually weaker, and then Italy was mentioned as a last resource. She expressed a desire to visit Florence, so either the Actons took her.

Mr. Ellison, on quitting Milford, had started for the Continent. He spent several months in Switzerland, then visited Paris, and after remaining for some time in the French capital, set out for Rome. The report of his marriage was false. He still loved Emily too tenderly, despite the duplicity he imagined her to have been guilty of towards himself, to think of making any other woman his wife. He had not heard of her illness, and he imagined the Actons were yet in Acton Lodge. He had taken letters of introduction from various friends in Paris to different English families who were loitering away a portion of their summer at Rome, endeavouring to recover on the banks of the Tiber the health they had dissipated during the gaieties of the Carnival; but he did not avail himself of many invitations. Most of his time was spent amid the ruins of the Amphitheatre, and that most perfect of all Roman temples, the Pantheon. Ellison had, while in Paris, formed a rather intimate acquaintance with an Italian nobleman, Prince Lissari. The Prince was now in Rome, and Ellison was introduced by him to the Palazzo Piorelli to Lord Mansfield, a fellow countryman of his own. Little idea had he at the time that the frank, handsome young Englishman he was presented to by his host was the same person as the Mr. Morton of Emily Herbert's letters, the possessor of her affections. Had he for one moment entertained a suspicion that such was the case, his manner would have been very different; for according to the statements made by the Weavers, Mr. Morton had acted most basely by Miss Herbert, and Ellison believed him to be the destroyer of her happiness. He deeded the letters given him by Clara plainly declared that Mr. Morton and not Emily had broken faith. When Weaver had told him that Morton on jilting Miss Herbert had married a lady of rank; and it was not until after a friendship of some months, when Ellison accidentally mentioned Milford, and Lord Mansfield inquired eagerly after the Actons, that the truth flashed upon his mind. An explanation took place, Lord Mansfield was too honourable to allow a shadow of blame to rest on Emily. He at once declared the truth—said he had been rejected by her, and placed in Ellison's hands all the letters he had ever received from her. Thus the treachery of the Weavers was fully revealed, and Emily perfectly exonerated from the faults laid to her charge.

Ellison instantly declared his intention of proceeding to England, to seek a reconciliation with Emily, and take proper measures for punishing the Weavers. Morton did all in his power to expedite his leaving, but endeavoured to convince him that Mr. Weaver was too insignificant a person to be noticed by him in any other way than in the shape of a sound horse-whipping.

The old Tuscan proverb of "chia la fa laspetta," ("Let him who does evil expect evil in return") was his reply, as he sprang into the carriage that was waiting to convey him to Naples.

He soon arrived in England, and proceeded to Acton Lodge, on the "wings of love, hope, and joy." A bitter disappointment awaited him there.

"I went alone to the old familiar place,
Where we so often met,
When twilight softened thy bright and radiant face,
And the sun had set.
All things around seemed whispering of the past
With thine image blest;
Even the changeful spray which the torrent cast,
As it downward went."

I stood and gazed with sad and heavy eye
On the waterfall,
And with a shouting voice of agony
On thy name did call."

He found that the Actons had quitted Milford shortly after himself. That they were then in Florence, and that Emily was dying. Deeply did he lament the unhappy fate which had prevented his knowing of their being at Florence before he quitted Italy.

Thither he now determined to retrace his steps without the slightest delay.

It was evening. The glorious splendour of an Italian sunset had almost faded into twilight when Emily Herbert, who lay on a couch in the garden of her uncle's villa, watching the radiant yet ever changing hues, was suddenly roused from the reverie into which she had fallen, by hearing her name pronounced in a well-known, fondly-remembered voice. Looking up, she met the anxious glances of Edward Ellison and Lord Mansfield. Feeling convinced that Edward was acquainted with her innocence, and totally forgetting on the instant that she had heard he was married, she started forward to meet him. The exertion was too much for her strength, and she fell back fainting on the seat from which she had half risen. When she recovered consciousness, she was in her own room, and Ellison and her aunt were tenderly watching her.

The former immediately proceeded to inform her of all that had occurred since they both parted, and poor Emily was restored to happiness by hearing from his own lips how very dear she still was to him, and how fondly he had cherished her memory even when he had believed her guilty of an intention of deceiving him.

The cause of her illness removed, Emily gained health rapidly. She recovered after having been on the threshold of the grave, and four months after Edward Ellison's arrival in Florence she became his wife. The whole party then returned to Acton Lodge accompanied by Lord Mansfield, who having overcome his attachment to Emily, soon married an English lady whom he had met abroad.

"Thank you, dear Aunt Hester. Is it really a true story?" "How glad I am they were married," cried several voices, as Aunt Hester laid down the manuscript, and having carefully wiped her spectacles placed them in their case.

"Did Mr. Weaver get a horse-whipping, Aunt Hester?" asked one small voice, "because if Mr. Ellison had no whip, I dare say papa would lend him his big one," and on looking round it was discovered that Master Bertie, the infant horrible, as I heard one old gentleman term a soon comfortably mounted on the curate's knee. At this moment the squire's sonorous voice was heard in the hall, and Mrs. Bolton peeping in, exclaimed, "What, not in your rooms, my dears; do you know that the dressing-bell rang full a quarter of an hour ago?"

The charade was a success. Blake Steele and Frank Long made admirable juniors; Sergeant P. was very fairly represented by a Q. C. staying at the Grange, and Mr. H. found a first-rate substitute in the squire's professional adviser; the squire himself playing the part of Mr. Justice B. The word acted was Courtship, and the court scene, a sort of parody of a case tried not long since in the Court of Common Pleas, wherein the whooping bird of Minerva was reported to have been shut in a lady's drawing-room by a follower of St. Benedict, caused the whole party with laughter, especially when Mr. Long read in a tragic voice these lines from Punch:—

"Bird of the cloister and the church,
Who, with my shoulder for thy perch,
My vigils lone art wont to share;
Men say we make a pretty pair.
Some smile at us, and others scowl,
My Owl."

The word "ship" was represented by a tableau. The scene on board the Duke of Edinburgh's frigate, when his Royal Highness was carried on board after the vile attempt made upon his life in Australia, was depicted, and then came "Courtship," a love affair, Sir Edward playing the devoted admirer with right good will, Mabel Bolton being the Queen of beauty.

A few minutes before the clock struck twelve,

"The first foot's entering step"

was heard, and immediately the hour had sounded, a large flagon of wassail was handed round, much after the same fashion in which the loving cup makes its appearance.

The master of Bolton Grange, as I have before said, was a staunch lover of ancient customs, and when that, to my mind, most solemn and touching of all psalms, the bells which ring the old year out, were borne upon the wind across the moorland from St. Mary's Tower, he insisted on all his guests joining in the old song of—

"We'll may we a be,
Ill may we never see;
Here's to the Queen,
And the gude company."

And now, wishing all the readers of THE LADY'S OWN PAPER well, I draw my "Christmas Week" to a close.

My Christmas Visit.

BY ANNA GRAHAM.

Author of "The Old Man's Story," "Too Late," &c.

IT was some years ago—never mind precisely how many—that I paid the notable Christmas visit I am going to tell you about, simply premising that I was a very young man at the time.

It was Christmas Eve, and what people are pleased to call "old-fashioned Christmas weather," although from all I can learn it seems to me that grey weeping clouds, streets choked up with raw smelling fogs and black, greasy, slippery pavements, were as common Christmas accompaniments in the "good old times" (?) as they are at present. Nevertheless, on the particular Christmas Eve to which I allude the weather was of the kind we usually welcome as seasonable, because it makes us draw the window curtains close and nestle down beside the glowing fire with such a pleasant appreciation of warmth and comfort and cosiness.

The fast-fallingsnowflakes came patter, patter against my window, vizz softly, like the tapping of muffled fingers. It had been snowing an hour or more, and the streets were now pretty well covered, as the deadened sound of passing footsteps and wheels attested.

Turning from my rather dreary window view of the eddying snowflakes and whitened housetops, I drew the warm-looking crimson curtains, thus enclosing myself in an atmosphere of perfect comfort, and settled myself in an easy chair by the fire, putting my slippered feet on the low fender to toast. Upon the table near me lay newspapers, Christmas annuals, and a new sensational novel containing two murders, one suicide, a most atrocious case of bigamy, and two or three little matters pertaining to the Divorce Court, but none of these had charms for me on this special evening; even my best cigars had lost their usual soothing power. The truth is, I was discontented, *ennuied*, and miserable, and I thought I had good reason to be, for here was I, with my strong, social instincts, sitting all alone—alone on Christmas Eve, of all nights in the year! I said bitterly to myself that my only reminders of the festive season were the Christmas annuals on the table and a little bunch of holly in a vase on my mantle-shelf, which I had bought that day of a ragged boy in pity for his half bare feet and benumbed purple fingers. Certainly the world used me very ill, for it apparently meant to leave me, without one remorseful pang, to eat my Christmas dinner in solitary state at my lodgings.

I had just come, a perfect stranger, to the great busy town of which I now found myself a resident, to take a situation of trust in a large banking firm. My family ties were few and distant; I had parents, certainly, and one sister, but they had gone to Lisbon for the winter in the hope of benefiting my father's failing health. So you see my Christmas appeared likely to be anything but a merry one.

I was just falling into speculations concerning the Christmas prospects of my fellow lodger—a young man of about my own age, who had only taken possession of the second floor that afternoon, and whose name I was still in ignorance of—when rat-tat came the postman's knock at the door, sharp, quick, and rousing, as no other knock can ever be—under some circumstances it seems to strike at the heart as sharply as at the door. But I felt no particular excitement on the present occasion, for I had heard from my mother only the day before, and I didn't think the knock had anything to do with me. The next minute, however, Esther, the dirty little maid of all work—she and all her belongings appeared to have a natural affinity for dirt—tapped at my door and handed me a letter. It was for me sure enough, "Mr. Charles Smyth."

I must here mention that I have the misfortune to belong to the multitudinous "Smyth" family; I say because a juvenile cousin of mine insists that we have sprung from the same genealogical tree, as there could have been but one Smyth in the beginning—that is, he says so, the assertion is not mine. However, I always spell my unenviable patronymic with a "y," not that it makes any difference in the pronunciation, but I settle myself that Smyth looks much better upon my card than the horribly plebeian *Smith*. To my disgust, the writer of this epistle had spelt my name with a vulgar "t." I opened it and read:—

"Dear Charlie,

"I suppose this note will find you at R—. Didn't you think I had quite forgotten you? I have not, though; but really I have been so fully occupied of holidays with us at the Laurels? We shall all be glad to see you, come to night if you can. I write this from town, where I have been detained some time, law business is so tedious; but I return home to night. You

can take the train to Grayfield, and Dick or I will meet you at the station.

"I expect you will not know the children, they have grown so much since you saw them last.

"I am in great haste as usual, so must lay my pen aside.

"With kind regards,

"Believe me to remain, yours very truly,

"J—"

"P.S.—Remember me to my old friend, your father, when you write."

I have omitted the signature at the foot of the sheet, for the simple reason that I could not read it.

"Why don't people write their names intelligibly," I muttered to myself as I tried to decipher the hieroglyphics.

The name surely began with a B; no, it was an R, or else a K, I could not decide which; then I picked out a letter which bore some resemblance to an O, another that looked like a Y with the tail cut off, and a third which a trifling stretch of imagination might convert into an M, and there my success ended. Try as I might, I could not conjure up any reasonable name out of this mysterious combination of impossible letters; so I gave it up and began wondering who on earth the individual with the bewildering signature could be who addressed me as "Dear Charlie," and invited me to visit him at The Laurels. I remembered that my father had been acquainted with a gentleman who resided at or near Grayfield, a pretty little village about three miles from R—, but I could not, for the life of me, recall his

stranger to him as he was to me, for he passed me with just a careless glance.

I grasped my valise and left the station in a fit of disgust, resolving to make my way alone to The Laurels. I was told at the gay-looking new hotel near the station, where I made sundry inquiries, that The Laurels was not more than a mile distant if I crossed the common; if I went round by the high road the distance would be considerably greater.

I at once decided on the short cut across the common; it looked wide and dreary under its spotless covering of snow, but the footpath across it was pointed out to me, and I struck boldly into it, whistling a tune as I went, with a view to self-ennivment.

No snow had fallen since I left B—, and the moon, now dimly visible through a veil of mist, shed a wan and sickly light over the white level expanse. Unfortunately, however, I had not proceeded far before this welcome ray disappeared, leaving me in almost total darkness, and one or two great snow flakes, fore-runners of another snow storm, came pattering in my face. In a few minutes the air was filled with them, whirling, driving, eddying with the rising wind, and dashing in my face till they nearly blinded me.

Anathematising my folly in attempting the common on such a night, I stumbled on, trying to keep to the track in which I had started, but quite uncertain whether or not I was wandering from it. Every now and then I went ankle deep into a snow-drift or tripped over a tiny hillock, and once I plunged incontinently into the prickly embrace of a thorn bush.

I was getting desperate when I perceived a figure moving unsteadily towards me, a small figure whitened from head to foot, and staggering blindly on through the drifting snow.

Could it be—yes, it really was a woman, a lady, too, I fancied.

"Will you please show me the way into the high road? I want to get off the common, and I have lost my way," she exclaimed in terrified, girlish tones, trembling almost to tears.

The spirit of chivalry forthwith awoke within me, rendering me oblivious of my own discomfort.

"Unhappily I need a guide myself," I replied, "but I will assist you to the utmost of my power. Young ladies should not be abroad on such a night as this."

"I know that; papa would be so cross if he knew it. I went to Grayfield this afternoon to see a friend who is very ill, and I stayed with her till after dark. Mamma didn't send any one to fetch me, because she expected my friend's brother to bring me home, but to-day he is ill too, so I started off by myself. I wasn't a bit afraid, for the moon was shining a little, and I thought I would run home across the common, as it was the nearest way. But then the clouds hid the moon again, and the snow drove into my face, so that I got bewildered and lost the path, and now I don't know where I am, and I am so tired and cold, and I'm sure my boots are full of snow," she said, looking up into my face with a piteous little appeal that I felt I could not see.

"Let me help you on," said I.

"Where do you wish to go?"

"To the Laurels; you know where that is, don't you? most people do."

"The Laurels!" exclaimed I in

astonishment; I am going there myself if I can find the way. My name is Smyth."

"Oh! are you Mr. Smyth?" cried the young lady, brightening up.

I modestly replied that I was that fortunate individual.

"And I am Fanny Roumaine. How strange that we should have met in this way! I declare it has almost made me forget my half-frozen

fingers and toes."

So Roumaine was the name I had tried in vain to decipher. It was quite an unfamiliar one to me.

"I should not have recognised you by your voice," she went on, "and of course I can't see your face. Did not Dick meet you at the station? What a shame! He said he would. And how is Mary?"

I could not inform her, for I had not the least idea who "Mary" might be.

"Mary?" I repeated, vacantly.

"Yes, your sister Mary, to be sure. I have not seen her for an age."

"My sister is quite well, Miss Roumaine," I stammered in sore bewilderment, for it happened that my sister's name was not Mary, but Kate.

What on earth did it all mean? A guilty impostor-like feeling came over me, turning my ears red hot. What if there had been some mistake? if the invitation had been intended for some other person; yet surely I was Charles Smyth, residing at 24, Clarence-street, R—.

Fortunately, at this juncture a light became visible at no great distance, which my companion, who had graciously accepted my proffered arm, beheld with great satisfaction. So, to tell you the truth, did I. It shone from the window of a little cottage on the border of the common, and towards it we hastened.

The snow had now nearly ceased to fall, and, guided



WHICH IS IT TO BE, CRUST OR CRUMB?

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name—I always had a bad memory for names—but I recollected his calling on us in London a long while ago, accompanied by two of his sons, both younger than myself. I also fancied that one of them had been called "Dick."

It was very odd, though, that this man, whose very existence I had nearly forgotten, and who had appeared equally oblivious of mine, should all of a sudden be moved to send a familiar note and invitation. Perhaps he knew of my forlorn condition.

"He must be in correspondence with my father," thought I, "or how could he know my address?"

At any rate I resolved to take the good the gods had provided without further questioning, so I hastily packed a valise with such articles as I might require, consulted a Bradshaw, and leaving a message for my landlady, who was out, I started for the railway station. The down train was due when I got there, and a few minutes sufficed to take me to Grayfield.

I stood shivering on the platform of the cold little station, and looking around me for the gentleman with the illegible name whom I expected to recognise, for I had a better memory for faces than for names; but of all the faces I saw there, not one presented a familiar feature to my sight. There was a young man who seemed to be waiting for somebody.

Could he be "Dick" if so, I was evidently as utter a

by the friendly light, we soon found ourselves in the high road, and a few minutes later at the gate of The Laurels.

The house appeared to be a handsome villa, surrounded by evergreens, now swaying slowly and heavily beneath their white burden of snow.

I entered it with horrible misgivings, and a vague sense of usurpation about me, feeling undecided whether or not to beat a hasty and ignominious retreat before it should be too late. It was too late now, for I stood in the lighted hall, and there, for the first time, I had a clear view of Miss Fanny. She was a slight, pretty girl of eighteen, or thereabouts, with a *petite* figure, a bright, merry face, and a wealth of sunny hair.

She shook the snow from her hat and muff, laughing, despite her aching hands and feet, at the dismay of the servant who admitted us; then she led me into a brilliantly lighted, pleasant room, decked with holly, where three or four merry children were very busy about a Christmas tree.

"Mamma," said Fanny, "here is Mr. Smyth, I met him on the road."

A middle-aged lady and a young man, the same whom I had seen at the railway station, arose from their seats by the fire at my entrance. I looked like a simpleton; I knew I did, for I was miserably conscious that they were gazing at me in astonishment, and that Fanny's blue eyes widened considerably as they turned upon me.

I stammered out something, I hardly know what, but I believe it was an inquiry for Mr. Roumaine, senior.

"Isn't Mr. Smyth greatly altered, mamma," said Fanny, turning her wondering eyes from me to her mother.

"Fanny, my dear, what a mistake you are making," said Mrs. Roumaine. "This gentleman is not Mr. Smyth."

"But indeed it is Mr. Smyth, mamma; he picked me up in the snow on his way here, and brought me home. Perhaps it is the moustache that alters his appearance so much, and his hair is darker than it used to be."

I here bewilderedly explained that my name was Charles Smyth, and that I had come in answer to Mr. Roumaine's kind invitation.

"But—good Heavens, Charles, how greatly you have changed in three years," said Dick, staring at me. "I beg your pardon, but really I cannot recognise you at all."

"Mr. Smyth, do you recollect going nutting with us the last time you were here?" put in one of the children, a curly-headed boy of ten or eleven.

Here was a poser for me. Nutting, indeed; why I had never in my life been within five miles of The Laurels until this unlucky night. How devoutly I wished myself back at my lodgings it is useless for me to say.

At this moment there was the commotion of a fresh arrival in the hall, and in bounced—yes, that's the word—a little, bustling, middle-aged gentleman.

"Here I am, my dear; here I am Fanny. Now children, don't you want a kiss; here's papa, home at last. I called at R— as I came along; it wasn't much out of my way, and I found Charlie hadn't had my letter; queer, wasn't it?—so I brought him with me. It was lucky I took it into my head to stop at R—. Come along, Charlie. And—horror of horrors, in walked my fellow lodger. I had seen him once that afternoon, and I recognised him instantly. Light flashed upon me, and confusion of face with it. My detestably common name had done all the mischief. The new occupant of the second floor also owned to the appellation of Charles Smyth, and I had unwittingly appropriated the note and the invitation which were rightfully his."

Was there ever position so awkward as the one in which I had thoughtlessly placed myself? What could these people think of me?

Fanny looked aghast. Dick stared, and I blushing explained the mistake, winding up with a sincere apology for my intrusion.

Mr. Roumaine looked at my dismayed countenance, and taking in the absurdity of the whole affair, went into a fit of irresistible laughter, in which he was joined first by my namesake, then by Dick, then by Fanny, and lastly by myself. Mr. Roumaine's merriment was contagious, and we all laughed in chorus; and strange to say in about ten minutes I was on the best of terms with the whole party, and the guest, in earnest this time, of Mr. Roumaine, who, good hospitable man, insisted on my remaining to share the Christmas festivities at The Laurels.

And a right merry Christmas we spent there. I joined in blindman's-buff and snapdragon with the children, played chess with Dick, danced and sang with Fanny, read Christmas stories to mamma, and talked politics with papa. Altogether, the week I spent at The Laurels was the happiest I had ever known, for was not Fanny there—pretty Fanny, with her bright face and ringing laugh and pleasant ways?

I heard her curly-headed brother Frank, who was studying English History, ask her sanely whether she preferred Charles the First or Charles the Second. She did not answer, but I think she must have liked Charles *primier* the best, don't you? for I came very often to The Laurels after that happy Christmas visit, and Fanny and I took long walks together, and had long mysterious talks in minor tones, and at last we gave Charles the Second an invitation to our wedding.

The Fashions of the Season,

OR
HINTS ON DRESSING FOR CHRISTMAS.

ONCE more merry Christmas is with us—social gatherings, family parties, dinner parties, evening parties, theatricals, public and private are commencing. Everyone is hidden to some good round dozen of such meetings—and every one—that is every lady fair is naturally asking "What shall I wear?" Let us as briefly as possible lay before her a well stocked wardrobe of dresses, reproduced as graphically as possible in pen and ink sketches, giving due precedence to the elegance of full skirts.

EVENING TOILETTES.

The first robe is of tulle. The under skirt plain,

may be scarlet, gold colour, or white. For greater economy, the very same design may be carried out in white tulle, the trimming laid on with coloured tulle, or in white muslin with satin ribbon.

The second robe is of blue silk, with a horizontal puffing of blue tulle, three quarters of a yard deep on the lower part of the skirt. The sleeves are of blue silk, with blue tulle puffed over them. The bodice and tunic are of white silk. The tunic ends two or three inches above the puffing of the skirt; it is straight at the edge, and follows the slope of the puffing; this tunic is edged with a broad white ribbon ruche. The bodice ends straight across back and front close to the arms, but with only a strap over them, and it is edged with a ruche, not quite so wide as that on the skirt. The top of the bodice is completed by puffings of blue tulle over blue silk, like those on the skirt. A blue waistband without ends is secured in front by a large blue rosette.

A third toilette is of white tulle. On the front skirt a flounce five inches deep is gathered, allowing one inch as a heading. Over the stitches is a two-inch wide bright green band of tulle or ribbon. If tulle, it is cut on the straight and folded. A second skirt is made only five inches shorter behind, but less in front, and edged with a three inch wide flounce, set on without a heading, and with a band of green not quite so wide as the first one. This is well looped up by five straps of green coming from the waist, all round the

back from hip to hip. In front it is much shorter, and describes one festoon only, like an apron piece. Of course the four festoons behind are smaller than the front one. Wherever the dress is caught up by the strap of tulle, a rosette is placed. In the centre of each rosette is a little cluster of white snow-drops. The berthe is pointed before and behind, but only about half the depth of the bodice. It is made of white tulle drawn horizontally, and very full, an edging of blond lace at the top, turned down, and hanging from the edge. The blond lace is headed by a small ruche of the green tulle. At the points before and behind are two green rosettes filled with snow-drops like those on the skirt.

This toilette may be very prettily made in pale pink tulle, or tulle, in place of the green trimming, using inch wide black ribbon velvet; the rosettes to be of pink filled with snowdrops, or of black velvet bows with a rose in each. The petticoat must be made of pale pink silk or of pink muslin, for coloured tulle loses its effect if worn over a white skirt. Or the dress may be entirely of turquoise blue, the trimmings of blue satin, and a very pale blush rose, in the centre of each rosette of black velvet. The roses that look best with blue are by daylight a saffron-yellow with deep pink hearts. By gas or lamp light these look like mellow blush roses of the palest pink. Or the first skirt may be of black silk or satin, the upper of black satin, and the trimmings of gold coloured satin.

A fourth toilette, is a pearl grey rich silk. A flounce scarcely four inches wide is box pleated on very full. It is cut in well marked van-dykes before pleating, so that when put on, the lower part of the flounce between each pleat describes a small point, the upper part is short. It is bound rather deeply with white satin, and placed on under a heading consisting of a three inch wide fold of the pearl grey silk, with inch wide folds of white satin in the centre. Five inches above this is another three inch wide band of the silk, with an inch wide centre of white satin. And again above all this is a flounce similar in all respects to the first and headed in a precisely corresponding manner. The bodice is trimmed with a Maria

Antoinette fichu which forms a such behind, and is trimmed with a frill headed by a band on the lower part of the fichu, and all round the sash. The upper band was a band only.

A fifth toilette is of white tulle or tulle. The frill skirt edged with a green flounce ten inches deep set on in fine pleats, all going one way, with a very slight heading. The tunic describes one scallop across the front to the waist; it is separated down the back and slightly folded over. The back also describes one scallop dipping to within ten inches of the under flounce. The tunic is edged all round with a five or six-inch wide flounce, the front first placed over the back at the waist. At the waist where this ends a knot of three bows of five-inch wide green ribbon, is placed, with the end six inches long. A berthe is formed on the bodice by a green flounce three inches wide, tacked down in folds, and a knot of green bows on each shoulder.

This toilette may be rendered in rich *gris grain* silk, of any colour, lace flouncing substituted for the green. The tunic in that case need only be simulated. It is also very suitable for velvet trimmed with lace; or the tunic only may be of velvet, the under skirt of satin. If lace is not possessed, the flounces on the satin skirt may be of the satin, and the velvet may be edged with three rolls of satin.



CONSIDERING HIS PROSPECTS.

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with three little rolls of satin upon it; above is a very full skirt, cut in four scallops deeply marked and inclined to be pointed, one at the back, one in front, and one each side. This also is trimmed with three little satin rolls, the first binding the edge. The bodice is of silk, cut square below the bosom and filled to the right altitude with tulle puffed horizontally with a roll of satin between each puffing, a row at the top and bottom of the puffing, finished with a lace edge. The sash is of the tulle edged round with three rows of the satin, arranged the same as on the skirt. This is a light, elegant and not at all an expensive toilette. It may be of white tulle, the trimming white satin, cerise, blue, pink, or myrtle green; one large rose is to be placed in the bosom of the dress, a little on one side. A second rose on the top of the head, and the third rose in the hair a little to one side of second. A satin ribbon to correspond in colour with the trimming of the skirt, and from which a locket is suspended, may be tied round the neck. If the dress is composed of white tulle, the bodice is to be of white silk. A yard will be sufficient for this style and need not be expensive; the silk keeps the figure a better shape than any other material. The petticoat under the tulle may be of white silk, or a couple of book muslin skirts can be worn. The same design for a dress will look very handsome in black tulle over black silk or satin. The trimming

After partaking of his tea, Tom sat over his cheerful glowing fire, wondering who could have left the opportune gift he had received, and from what motive it could have been given. These questions completely baffled Tom's ingenuity to answer, and soon those bright eyes that had haunted him before that evening began to grow upon him, out of the fire, and he immediately commenced indulging in the wildest hopes of ultimate riches, and a right to address a superior a being, all superinduced by the novelty of possessing a superfluous amount of money or money's worth; and having left his fireside and commenced his walk to the address given, those eyes still followed him, and he was reminded even of their forcibly of their entrancing possessor by the fact of his traversing the spot where he usually met her of a evening.

Tom had but little difficulty in finding the house he was in search of. It was a large house with an air of substantial comfort pervading it that impressed you with an idea of wealth and ease within. He gave in his name, as requested, to the servant, who obeyed his summons, and was shown into a large, well-lighted, cheerful room, where a lady and gentleman were seated. What was the greeting he gave and received on that occasion, he never knew, for his eyes encountered two objects which drove all his matter from his sight and mind. He could hear the sound of the gentleman's voice addressing him, but he could not hear the words he uttered. And what wonder? he could not collect his thoughts to realize his present position, for the lady whom he now saw was the "Divinity" he had worshipped in secret; and near to her hung a portrait so like his mother, not as he had last seen her, but in the bright days of her maidenhood when cure had not shaded her brow, and as he could dimly remember her to have looked in his boyhood before her life and love had departed her.

He recovered himself as quickly as possible, though he never conscientiously knew precisely how long that operation took, and instead of himself commencing an apology for what he thought must be considered his peculiar behaviour on first introducing himself, "That portrait is so much like my mother was," he went on, "that it quite startled me, seeing it here so unexpectedly." He did not mention a word about the surprise of seeing his unknown "lady" rise at a sign from her father and passed him to leave the room, he thought there was a half-mischiefous twinkle in her bright eyes, and a deeper colour on her cheeks, that he had not time to mentally inquire the meaning of.

"You received the note I left at your lodgings this evening, I suppose," said the old gentleman, "and have come here as I tell you." "Perhaps I had better preface my remarks by requesting your friends are pleased to account me rather eccentric, that is, I blantly say what I mean, and arrive more hastily at conclusions than people generally do, though I seldom find I am wrong in the end."

Tom began to wonder whether this "eccentricity," in other parlance, would not bear a harsher name, but if this was the case, his madness had taken a very pleasing form, for as far as Tom was concerned, and he could therefore, look kindly upon it. But this idea was soon dispelled by the laud manner in which he questioned Tom, and by his ultimate account of himself.

"As I hope I have proved to-night," he continued, "I take an interest in you; I have inquired your antecedents from Mr. Vellum, which are highly satisfactory, and now I want an account of yourself from yourself." Tom felt rather embarrassed where to commence this history of himself. He had not been such a very eventful life, that he could make it appear of much interest to a stranger. So after briefly dwelling upon the happiness of his home before the death of his father, he recorded all occasions that stood out most prominently from that event, dwelling with a lingering softness on the death of his mother, as if she was the last sweet remembrance of childhood's days. The listener sat with his face concealed from the light, so Tom could not see by the expression of his features what impression his narrative made. But when he had concluded the old gentleman said, "Mr. Vellum informed me there was some unhappy difference with your mother's family before her marriage, or in consequence of it. You see I know something of your family history."

Tom glanced instinctively at that face, so like his mother's, looking down upon him, and then proceeded, as far as he knew, to explain the matter as requested, when he was again interrupted.

"And this brother of your mother's, you say, never recognised your mother after her marriage?"

"No," replied Tom.

"And you have not heard anything of him, or received any assistance from him?"

"No, never," was the response.

"And consequently you consider him a most hard-hearted, reprehensible brute," continued the old gentleman.

Well, Tom didn't know; those were rather hard terms, but his opinion of his uncle was such, that as he had had to turn to pity for his (Tom's) mother, but left her to starve and die for all he knew or appeared to care, he, Tom, would considerably prefer knowing his attention to crossing-sweeping—always supposing no turning his attention to receiving the most lucrative pecuniary occupation procurable—to receiving the most lucrative pecuniary advances so tardily bestowed from that uncle,—and Tom spoke very enthusiastically, and looked almost fierce as he denounced his relative.

To his surprise the old gentleman arose, and bringing his hand down not too lightly on Tom's firm shoulder, exclaimed delightedly, "That is the true Morton spirit, dear boy. There is no more to convince me of your descent from the family. And now as you have been so open with me, I will be equally open to you. It was my acquaintance with that uncle who convinced me just denominated that induced me to sever you out, and now it must be my endeavour to make the best of you. I fancy, like a possibly guilty of many sins (as who is not?) I fancy, like a certain snivelling snob, he is not so black as he is painted."

He was, as you said, indignant at your mother's marriage with your father, whether justly or not I will not discuss now. You are possibly aware that a year or two after Mr. Morton had married, Ebenezer Morton went abroad to superintend a large branch establishment, leaving in England as his representative a man whom for years he had known and valued for his integrity and fine business sense. This man's name was James Gould. When abroad your uncle met, loved, and married one as beautiful as she was amiable, and whose gentle influence seemed to soften down the hard knots in your uncle's temperament. His marriage formed new ties to his new home and made him low the land he had now adopted, and having perfect confidence in his English, whose reputation was well known, though always factious, he did not visit his native land for years, though always talking of doing so. This marriage also, eminently happy as it was, made him think more kindly of the dear sister he had treated so harshly, and besides frequently forwarding her and her husband sums of money, he wrote inviting him to a share in the business in England, but this offer, to Ebenezer Morton's astonishment, was decidedly refused. When the news of the death of your mother reached you, it affected him more powerfully than any other event had ever done, for he was passionately devoted to her; indeed, it struck it was his excessive love for her that made him so indignant at what he considered

her mesalliance, and he now felt most acutely as there had survived him any direct reconciliation. You may well look surprised, and I will now tell you how it happened that you never heard of these efforts on the part of your uncle before, and then perhaps you may think better of him. When the next great blow to your uncle fell, and his loved and loving wife died, all the holy ties that bound him seemed severed, and when his health was sufficiently restored he determined to come for change of scene once more to England. But when arrived, fresh troubles awaited him. He found his English affairs in hopeless confusion. During the weeks of his wife's illness, he had not looked at a business report, and James Gould, the trusted and valued manager, whom your uncle now intended to have made a partner, had absconded. Every day brought to light some fresh malpractice and dishonest appropriation, and as James Gould could alone unravel the inextricable confusion of matters, he was advertised and searched for in every direction. At length a telegram arrived from an obscure town on the coast, requiring your uncle's immediate presence, and saying James Gould was at length discovered. When he arrived at the place named he found his former manager at a small inn, and lying on his death-bed. I believed then, and I still believe, he met his death at his own hands, though a jury of illiterate yokels said it was by natural causes. But there, as he lay gasping all his few last remaining breaths, he disclosed the worst villainy of all, the fact that he had applied to his own uses the money sent over through his hands to Mrs. Treadwell, and that he had never received any of the letters deputed to pass through his hand, much less the offer of appointment in the firm for Mr. Treadwell, as he feared any one interested in the fortunes of the Morton's being introduced. He had managed to make all matters appear right in



The Christmas Appeal.

his reports, and had succeeded till now, when the arrival of your uncle had, combined with pressure of circumstances, brought affairs to a climax. Your uncle was incensed almost to madness by this confession of villainy, and he could not utter the forgiveness the lying wretch craved, though God grant he may have done so in his dying breath.

"His first effort, on recovering from the shock, was to seek out the son of his sister, who, his wily manager had led him to believe, had been dead some years, fearing his (the son's) influence would work against him. More I need not now tell you, but ask you to think better of your uncle Ebenezer Morton."

Tom was so amazed at the now true events had taken that he could scarcely believe his own senses. "I am only sorry," said Tom, "that I have so long thought and spoken so harshly of my uncle."

"Where is he, that I may thank him for all the kindness he would have done us, and ask his forgiveness for the ill I have thought of him?"

"I am that uncle," replied the old gentleman, and fairly sobbed on his nephew's shoulder.

Meetings and partings are always so much "better imagined than described" that I will spare the reader all trouble of a graphic account, or of the conversation which afterwards ensued, where everything was so satisfactorily concluded and explained.

"And now," said Mr. Morton at length, "I must introduce you to your cousin May. I named her Isabel after your mother. She seems to me to possess all the loving qualities of her mother and yours, and all the love I felt for them is centred in her."

Tom was nothing loth to follow his uncle and claim the beautiful May as his cousin. And May called him "Cousin

Tom," as they shook hands, which quite entranced Tom, and then they all talked over affairs together. May had known for some time that Tom was her cousin, ever since that day she was in his office. But I will not attempt to describe that Christmas Eve, for I could never convey an adequate idea of the happiness of those three hearts if I tried. May played and sang cheerfully, and Tom managed a vocal duet with her so well that May was loud in her praises of his "fine tenor voice," and Tom was delighted to be complimented by her. And when he left, which was at a late hour, it was arranged he was to spend the whole of the next day there at his uncle's.

On Tom's arrival at his lodgings, Mrs. Tibbs looked undoubtedly injured as she opened the door as to late in the hour. Tom was in far too good a humour to notice it, and retiring to his room he sat and thought over all the events of the Eve? He could scarcely realize the events of the past few hours, and seemed already to have left his former life far behind. When he slept, it all followed him thro' his dreams, till awakening in the morning, he almost imagined it must be a dream, but there was the bank note substantially to prove at least that portion was real. He dressed himself with scrupulous care, and morning before proceeding to his uncle's house. Surely, now he was a happier Christmas Day, hearts full of love, and feeling the forgiver and forgiven were met in happy union. All Tom's doubts and problems as regarded his Christmas dinner were dispelled, and he quite gloried in his recent discontinuance as he related to his uncle and cousin the perplexity he had been in, with regard to his economical expenditure of his ten shillings. In graver matters than this, we can talk lightly of trials, now dissipated, that once threatened to shadow our lives, and speak of our thoughts and feelings of the past, as though they had never belonged to us, but came to our knowledge through some source, other than our own hearts.

But what need to add more? Surely the intelligent reader has already guessed that Tom was beloved as well as loving. Before the next Christmas dawned, he had by the advice of his uncle, given up the law and become an equal partner in his uncle's extensive commercial pursuits, and was looked up to as a prosperous, rising man. But more than this, he had also obtained the most charming, loving wife that ever blessed the heart and home of man: May was the light and sunshine, across whose ray never cloud passed, of her husband's life, as she had ever been, and still was, of her father's. Their Christmas family gathering is now increased by bright, chubby, young faces, whom grandpapa delights in spoiling, May declares. So we will bid adieu to Tom Treadwell, wishing all the happiest and merriest of Christmas-tides.

Christmas Cookery.

We would recommend each of our readers as possessors our last Christmas number, to turn to it again at this season when plum puddings and mince-cakes reign all but supreme, and read over the many excellent and varied receipts it supplies, including those for the "Lady's Own" mince-cake and pudding, as well as directions for seasonable tarts and cakes. To many, however, this number may not be within reach, and we have, therefore, appended a few receipts that possess the recommendation of having been well tested by their respective authors. In the matter of Christmas puddings, we know, most families possess a time-honoured receipt of their own; and housewives do not generally care to risk testing the merits of others. Still, there may be some amongst our readers who may wish to compare their receipts before they finally fix their choice, and to them we recommend the perusal of the following:

CHRISTMAS PUDDING.—Time, six hours. S. Take one pound and a half of raisins, half a pound of currant, three quarters of a pound of bread crumbs, half a pound of flour, three quarters of a pound of beef suet, nine eggs, one wine glass of brandy, half a pound of citron and orange peel, half a nutmeg, and a little ground ginger. Chop the suet as fine as possible, and mix it with the bread crumbs and flour; add the currants, washed and dried; the citron and orange peel cut into thin slices, and the raisins stoned and divided. Mix it all we'll together, with the grated nutmeg and ginger; then stir in nine eggs, well beaten, and the brandy, and again mix it thoroughly together, and every ingredient may be moistened. Put it into a buttered mould, tie it over tightly, boil it for six hours. Serve it ornamented with jelly and brandy poured round it.

ANOTHER.—Here is the receipt from Bentley's "Pudding Book":—"One pound of chopped beef suet, one pound of stoned raisins, one pound of washed currants, half a pound of bread crumbs, a quarter of a pound of sugar, half an ounce of mixed spice, a quarter of a pound of candied lemon and orange peel, a gill of brandy, a gill of cream, four eggs well beaten. Mix thoroughly, fold in a cloth for four hours. Serve with some sauce or burnt brandy."

ANOTHER from "My Receipt Book, by a Lady."—Take half a pound of raisins, stoned and chopped, the same weight of currants, three quarters of a pound of beef suet, chopped, a quarter of a pound of candied lemon, two ounces of candied lemon of a pound of grated bread crumbs, two ounces of candied lemon and orange peel, shred fine, a nutmeg grated, a salt spoonful of ground ginger, four ounces of moist sugar, a pint of salt. Mix these ingredients with eight eggs well beaten and a wineglass full of brandy. Butter a mould or basin, fill with the mixture and boil four hours. Serve with brandy sauce.

MINCE-CAKE.—The following is the receipt for mince-cake, as made at Clowely Court, Devon. Take two pounds of raisins, two pounds of currants, stoned and picked, four pounds of finely-chopped beef suet, one pound and a quarter of the best part of a pig's tongue boiled, one pound of sugar, three nutmegs, half an ounce of uice, and the same quantity of cloves; the juices, pulp, and peel of six lemons, four ounces of candied lemon peel; mix all thoroughly together; leave ready a clean stone jar; put in your mince-cake, stir it well, and put to it by degrees a bottle of brandy, and a quart of mountain; in a bladder over the jar, and keep it in a dry cool place. This, however, is rather an expensive receipt, but at the present price of raisins and currants an exceedingly good mince-cake may be made in the following manner, at a cost of about 8d. a pound:—One pound of beef suet, one pound of currants, washed very clean in two or three waters and dried before the fire; a pound of raisins stoned and cut up; a pound of Sultan raisins; a quarter of a pound of candied peel; two pounds of mixed apples; one pound of moist sugar; a pint of brandy; and their rims put off as thin as possible and shred small; a quarter of a pound of mixed spice, and a gill of brandy.

(To be Continued.)

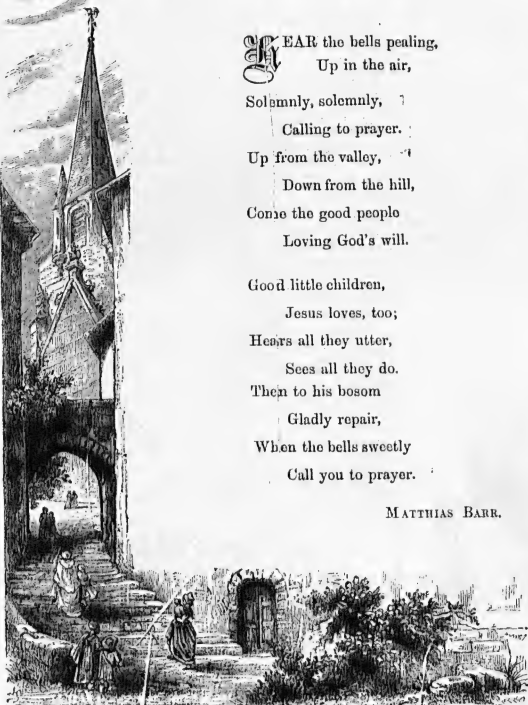
"Some months since my wife was suffering from a bad cough and severe pains in the chest, and totally unable to attend to her ordinary duties. She was advised to try Dr. Pain Killer, and after taking a few doses was restored to perfect health, from which I have now enjoyed a long and happy recovery. I have also used it for piles, for which it has been given me in a most successful manner. I am, Sir, very respectfully,
Yours truly,
JAMES BRADSHAW, Hopwood Street, Liverpool, Dec. 26, 1867.—To Perry Davis & Son, 17, Southamton-street, Holborn."

The Children's Column.

THE CHRISTMAS BELLS.

HEAR the bells pealing,
Up in the air,
Solemnly, solemnly,
Calling to prayer:
Up from the valley,
Down from the hill,
Come the good people
Loving God's will.
Good little children,
Jesus loves, too;
Hears all they utter,
Sees all they do.
Then to his bosom
Gladly repair,
When the bells sweetly
Call you to prayer.

MATTHIAS BARR.



LIFE'S JOURNEY.—We talk of human life as a journey, but how variously is that journey performed! There are some who come forth girt, and shod, and mantled to walk on velvet lawns and smooth terraces, where every gale is arrested, and every beam tempered. There are others who walk on the Alpine paths of life, against driving misery, and through stormy sorrows, over sharp afflictions; walk with bare feet and naked breast, jaded, mangled, and chilled.

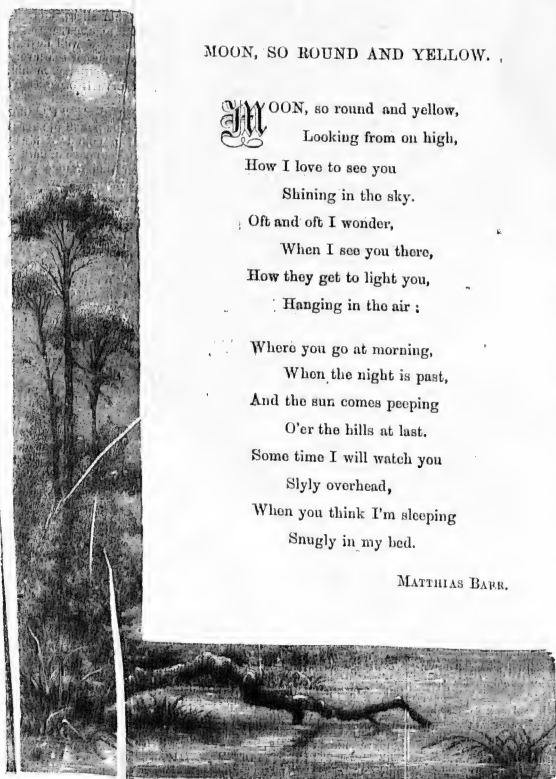
POET, &c.—The following is hard to beat for depth of pathos and soul-stirring sentiment:—

"Here's Pize and Kakes and Bier I sell,
And Oisters stood & in the shell,
And fride vuns few for them that chews,
And with dispatch blag bakes & brewes."
Where do chimney ornaments come from? --- Mount-Vase-ivins.

MOON, SO ROUND AND YELLOW.

MOON, so round and yellow,
Looking from on high,
How I love to see you
Shining in the sky.
Oft and oft I wonder,
When I see you there,
How they get to light you,
Hanging in the air;
Where you go at morning,
When the night is past,
And the sun comes peeping
O'er the hills at last.
Some time I will watch you
Slyly overhead,
When you think I'm sleeping
Snugly in my bed.

MATTHIAS BARR.



The Humourist.



ANON GODALL was proverbially fond of punning. About the same time that he was made Provost of Eton he also received a stall at Windsor. A young lady of his acquaintance, while congratulating him on his elevation, and requesting him to give the young ladies of Eton and Windsor a hall during the vacation, happened to touch his wig with her fan, and caused the powder to fly about, upon which the doctor exclaimed, "My dear, you can get the powder out of the canon, but not the ball."

MR. FULLER, a Methodist preacher, found it necessary to eke out a scanty living by selling books. He called on a lady in a parish where he once laboured. As he announced his errand, the lady expressed her horror and surprise. "What! Mr. Fuller, I thought you laboured for souls and not for money." Fuller replied: "A minister cannot live on souls, and if he could, he'd soon depopulate such a region as this."

An instructor of a young idea was illustrating the points of the compass to two pupils. "Now, John, what is before you?" "The north, sir," said John, who was an intelligent lad. "Now, Tommy," said he to the other, who had just donned a long coat, "what is behind you?" "My coat tails, sir," said Tommy.

"A **PUSIVE** verb," said a teacher, "is expressive of the nature of receiving an action, as, 'Peter is beaten.' Now what did Peter do?" "Well I don't know," said the scholar, deliberating, "unless he hollored."

A **STINGY** husband accounted for all the blame of lawlessness of his children in company by saying his wife always gave them their own way. "Poor things, it's all I have to give them," was her prompt reply.

THE COUCH FOR A SHEPHERD.—A "flock" bed.

A **YOUNG** physician, asking permission of a lass to kiss her, she replied, "No, sir; I never like a doctor's bill stuck in my face."

Why is a watch-dog larger at night than he is in the morning? Because he is *let out* at night, and *taken in* in the morning.

A **FRASE** OF IMAGINATION.—When your stomach is empty and your pocket also, sit down near a hot fire and read a cookery book.

"WHIPPING is the best thing to make children enlightened," said old Mrs. Bitterkins; "I never whip mine but it makes 'em smart."

FORGETS AND TAKES.—Naturalists assert that the leaves of trees are continually in a fluttering motion in order to purify the air by flapping it. And Jobus says perhaps the continued motion of a woman's tongue is to assist in shaking and jolting the atmosphere for a similar purpose.

BABY'S PATH.—The milky way.

A **PIOUS** PERFUME.—The odour of sanctity.

When are gloves unsaleable? When they are kept on hand.

The long head is never headlong. Josh Billings says that the man that wrote "I would not live always, I ask not to stay," probably never had been urged sufficiently.

"This is my case," as the oyster remarked of his shell.

A **RHODE** ISLAND newspaper prints the following amongst the marriage notices:—"In Thompson, Ct., Nov. 29th, by the Rev. W. L. Blood, Rufus Briggs to Sarah L. Greenleaf, of Auburn, Mass., after a long and tedious courtship of over five years."

A **SCOTTICAL** young collegian confronted an old Quaker with the statement that he did not believe in the Bible. Said the Quaker "Does thee believe in France?" "Yes, for though I have not seen it, I have seen others that have. Besides there is plenty of corroborative proof that such a country does exist." "Then thee will not believe anything thee or others have not seen?" "No, to be sure I won't." "Did thee ever see thy own brains?" "No." "Ever seen anybody that did?" "No."

"Does thee believe thee hast any?"

* By the courteous permission of the respective publishers, we have been enabled this week to lay several very pleasing illustrations before our readers, and these call here for a brief word of acknowledgment, as we are compelled to postpone our review of the works whence they are chosen. The graphic and suggestive sketches on pages 400 and 407, with initial letters, are taken from a technical publication *called Photographic*; while those on pages 404 and 405 are from two handsome juvenile gift books just brought out by S. W. Partridge and Co., 9, Paternoster Row, namely, "Clever Dogs, Horses, etc." by Shirley Hilbert, and "Jack the Conqueror; or, Difficulties Overcome," by C. E. Bowen. Both of these belong to Messrs. Partridge's well-known series of illustrated books, and will doubtless become, as they deserve to be, very popular this season. The "Winter" scene on page 401 is selected from the "British Workman Almanack," an illustrated broadsheet that merits a place in every cottage home, while the illustration by Matthias Barr, with their accompanying illustrations, are from "The Child's Garland of Poems," a handsome volume published by Messrs. Cassell, that has already been commended by us, though not too highly, as may be judged from the specimens we now supply. A more extended notice of some of these works will be given in an early number.

The Lady's Own Paper.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 26, 1868.

A WORD WITH OUR READERS.

At the close of another year we are happy to be able to make the pleasing announcement that we have determined, guided alike by the experience acquired in conducting, for over two years, a paper that has been gradually and steadily winning its way into public favour, and by the knowledge derived from a careful study of the expressed wishes of many of our oldest subscribers and most zealous supporters, to effect several valuable improvements in the **LADY'S OWN PAPER** for 1869, by which its attractions will be greatly enhanced. It is intended to have it printed on a very superior, rich-toned paper, of a quality that cannot fail to please the most exacting; to greatly improve the portraits, introducing at intervals those of distinguished gentlemen; to give in every number a review by an able writer of the "book of the week," and to extend our general literary, dramatic, and musical notices, by which means our readers will be kept thoroughly informed on everything of importance that is passing in the literary and musical world; to increase both the quantity and quality of our fashion illustrations; to devote space to a series of articles on the Toilet, embracing special and trustworthy information on many matters of great importance to ladies; to give special reports, with illustrations, of all novelties presumably of interest to ladies that may be brought out; and lastly, to increase the interest of our fiction department: so that while the paper will not lose its attractions as a newspaper, duly chronicling everything of importance to ladies, it will at the same time, through its novels, light sparkling essays, illustrations, &c., have the permanent value of a magazine, thus fully sustaining its reputation as the *best and cheapest Paper published for Ladies*.

To enable the Proprietor to give full force to these improvements, a slight advance will be made in the price of the paper; but when the value of the additions which such advance secures is considered, it will, we are confident, meet with the warmest approval of our readers. From the New Year, therefore, the price of the paper will be 3d. weekly, or by subscription as follows:—One year (post free from the office on the day of publication), 17s.; half a year, 8s. 8d.; or per quarter, 4s. 4d. Subscriptions are payable to Mr. William Freeman, at 102, Fleet-street, where letters for the Editor should also be addressed.

In our next number will appear, amongst other seasonable matter, a story by A. H. Wall, entitled "Christmas in Sherwood Forest," and an amusing and instructive paper on "Christmas Day in St. Peter's at Rome," by a talented writer. We have also arranged for a short series of illustrated articles by a gentleman of great experience in such matters, on Painting, Drawing, Photographic Colouring, &c.; while much more attention will be devoted, as we have already hinted, to the Fashions and the Toilette, as well as to Literary and Dramatic Criticism.

The large space we have set aside in this issue to seasonable tales, poetry, and illustrations, has necessitated our omitting many features of interest that ordinarily find a place in our columns, but these will all be again resumed, with the additional attractions we have detailed above, and others that we hope to announce with the New Year. In our next, number Shirley Gerard's novel, "With all Her Faults," which is unavoidably interrupted this week, will be continued, and with our number for January 9 will be published the title-page and index for the current volume.

In conclusion, we would, while specially thanking such of our subscribers as have exerted themselves to make the Paper better known amongst their friends, heartily wish all our readers, in the good old-fashioned way,

"A JOYOUS CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR."

Discretion of speech is more than eloquence; and to speak agreeably to him with whom we converse, is more than to speak in exact order.—*Bacon*.

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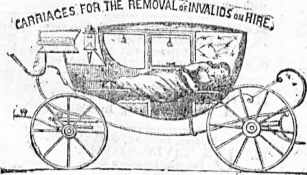
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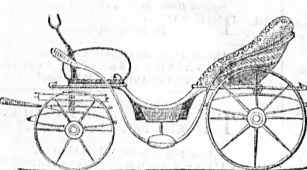
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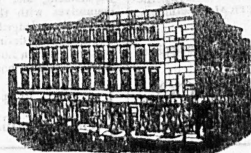
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Can any be more deserving of compassion?

The girls are taught to become industrious and
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gone out in various capacities, and are giving every
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Of the boys, upwards of 30 have left, and are all
occupying respectable situations, but in order to
meet the necessity, which exists for the boys having
a more extended sphere of employment, the Com-
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generously contributed to a work which has by its
results proved itself worthy of their warm sympathy
and support, and which promises to become a
valuable service as it is invaluable to the
children in the benefits they receive.

CONTINUATION towards the recent alterations,
and for the maintenance of the children, are
earnestly solicited, and will be thankfully received
by the officers, as under:
Life Presentation.—A donation of £200 in one sum,
or subscribed in various sums during a period not
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the child always in the Asylum; provided, of course
Admission by Purchase.—Where the child is six
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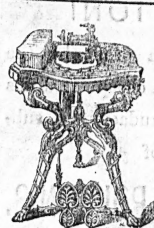
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